A DISCOURSE OF Humane Reason:

With Relation to *Matters* of *Religion.*

Rationabilem sortitis Naturam quæ meliùs Res quàm Ratio proponitur?
Senec. de vit. beat. cap. 14.

LICENS'D,
Jan. 16. 16$\frac{89}{90}$. *J. F.*

LONDON,
Printed for *Awnsham Churchill,* at the Black Swan in *Ave-Mary* Lane, 1690.

156 + 4
C.D.V.1.900

Union Theol. Sem. Library
MCALPIN
1690
tD611

A Prefatory Letter TO A FRIEND.

SIR,

ACcording to my Promise, I now send you the Discourse of Humane Reason in English, which you have been told I published some Years ago in French. I say, I send you That Discourse: Because indeed this contains all that was in it. But the truth is, that when I took that Subject this second time into consideration, the Irksomness of translating slavishly my own Expressions, and the fresh Matter that offered it self to my Thoughts, have induced me so to alter and augment it, that though several Particulars

be still the same, yet the whole is very much another thing.

The chief Design of this Discourse is, to assist Men in conquering those Prejudices, that hinder them from making use of their own Reason in Matters of Religion. And this is endeavoured to be done, not only by way of Argument, but more especially by the weight of many Ancient and Venerable Authorities, concurring in such Principles as lead directly to that Practice. Now though several things have already been published in English *on the like Subject; yet as every Argument is not equally fit for every Capacity; I hope that, whilst I follow a Path not trod in by others, my Labour will not be esteemed superfluous.*

The Circumstances of our Times do particularly incourage to Discourses of this Nature. Liberty in Religion, which has some while seemed to be in the Pangs of Birth, if happily it can force its passage into the World, and do ever attain to that due maturity and strength which all good Men wish it, will infallibly work the same Effect that we have seen arise from Liberty in Philosophy. Clouds will be dissipated; the Scales will fall from Mens Eyes; and Truth will appear most beautiful in her naked simplicity. Certain I am, that these

things

things appear already to many in this Nation, not in a faint Dawn only, but in a full Meridian Brightness. The opportunity ought therefore to be improved; that those who have not yet discovered any glimpse of this Light may be directed to its appearance: in plain terms, that they may learn to consult that Beam of the Divinity, (whatever we call it, Reason *or* Spirit*) which is united to our Nature, in which only consists our Faculty of Discerning, and which is best able to direct us universally in our Duty.*

It is impossible we should ever arrive at that perfect Liberty which we breath after, until a Door of Entrance into it be opened by this Key. Whilst Mens Hearts are lock'd up against one another, by innumerable Prejudices arising from the narrowness of their Principles, it is no wonder if Societies be so too. The Cure of that Evil can therefore never be wrought, by associating any number of Men of similar Principles into one Body: but it may easily be advanced, by improving those Universal Principles which are already disseminated in the Minds of all Men. That is true Comprehension, which comprehends all Mankind. *The Love of God does so.* He

He (a) is good unto All, and his tender Mercies are over all his Works. *And why the Love of Princes to their Subjects, nay the Love of all Men to one another, should not operate (according to our measure) in conformity to his Pattern, I am not able to conceive. Sure I am that* Christianity *teaches us this Duty. The peculiar Spirit of the Gospel, if there be any thing peculiar in it, is* Universal Love and Charity; *though in strictness of expression perhaps ought not even that to be called peculiar. For these are Duties evidently discernable by the Light of Nature. And the whole Substance of Christianity it self, according to St.* John's *account of it, is most certainly founded upon that Universal* (b) Light, which enlightneth every Man that comes into the World.

It can never be well with us therefore, whilst we build either our Religion, *or our* Politicks, *upon any narrower Principles than those upon which God himself has laid them. Every Sect, alas, has now a several Scheme of* Fundamentals; *whilst few consider what they themselves mean by the Word.* Fundamentals in Religion, (in

(a) Psal. 145. 9. (b) John 1. 9.

(in my sense) are those things upon which all Religion whatsoever is grounded. And those certainly are generally agreed upon by all Men. For all Men have really some sense of Religion, more or less. The Superstructures that are made upon these Foundations indeed are different. This Man erects a Palace, that a Cottage. But every Man, surely, whilst he builds upon the general Foundation allotted to all Men, ought not to be disturbed in his Habitation. Fundamentals in Politicks, *are those things without which the general Peace and Welfare of Mankind cannot be procured, or maintained. Those are the Notions of Right and Wrong, Vice and Vertue, and generally all that part of Morality, relating to the reciprocal Duties of Man and Man, which results from the Consideration of those Circumstances in which God Almighty has placed us. These, I say, are Fundamentals. For these are the Laws that God has promulgated to all Men, and by which therefore he will certainly judg all Men; I will add also, and by which therefore,* only, *we ought to judg one another.*

O how happy might we be, if our Rulers would heartily intend this Work; If our Teachers would industriously improve these Truths; And if our People were fitted to

enter

enter into a Constitution built upon this Basis! But the Obstacles I doubt are yet great on all sides. And though things seem to have some little tendency this way, yet unless these Means be pursued, which I have here hinted at; I mean, unless endeavours be used to enlarge Mens Principles; unless every Man that has in any degree tasted the sweetness of this Spirit himself, endeavour with all meekness and sobriety to diffuse it amongst his Neighbours; I say, unless this be mightily and strongly endeavoured, it is to be feared we shall be sadly frustrated of all our most flattering Expectations.

The sense of these Considerations, Sir, *has moved me to acquit my self of my particular Promise to you, by the publication of this ensuing Discourse; which I hope will not be altogether unuseful to others. Whatever be the Success of it, I shall always have comfort in my own Mind, in that I have done what I conceived to be my Duty. The rest I submit to Providence. And shall remain always most affectionately Yours.*

ERRATA.

PAge 39. line 19, for *this*, read *his*. P. 42. l. 15. f. *Statutis*, r. *Statuis*. P. 64. l. 21. f. *guilt*, r. *guile*. P. 72. l. 26. f. *tuæ*, r. *tui*.

A DISCOURSE OF Humane Reason, With Relation to Matters of Religion.

IT is a wonderful thing to consider the Heats and Animosities that are sprung up in the World, from the Differences of our Opinions, in what we call *Articles of Faith.* Every Man will have his own to be the only true Ones. Nay, some Men (alas too many) are so barbarous, that they not only condemn others to Death, but deliver them also by their *Anathema*'s (as much as in

them lies) to the Devil and Damnation, for a little Difference only in Opinion in some Metaphysical Speculations. It is nevertheless most certain, that neither *Christ*, nor his *Apostles*, have tied the Salvation of Mankind so indispensably to the particular belief of any incomprehensible Mysteries, as the pretended Doctors of his Church now do it. We read that (*a*) *Our Lord* himself pronounced St. *Peter Blessed*, upon his bare Declaration that he believed him to be *the Christ, the Son of the Living God.* St. *Philip*, in like manner, baptized the *Eunuch*, upon no other profession of his Faith, than in the terms of this short Symbol; (*b*) *I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.* St. *John* teaches us plainly, (*c*) That *to confess that Jesus Christ is come in the Flesh*, is a certain characteristical Mark of the Spirit of God. And St. *Paul* explains himself in that Point yet more particularly, telling us, (*d*) That *if we confess with our Mouth the Lord Jesus, and believe in our Heart that God hath raised him from the Dead, we shall be saved.*

This also was the Sense of the Primitive Fathers; and particularly of St.

(*a*) *Mat.*16.16,17. (*b*) *Acts* 8.37. (*c*) 1 *John* 4.2. (*d*) *Rom.*10.9.

St. *Hilary*, who ſays, That (*e*) *God does not call us to future Felicity, by intricate and difficult Queſtions. The way to Eternity*, ſays he, *lies open before us, and is plain and eaſy. We are required only to believe, that God has raiſed Jeſus Chriſt from the Dead, and to confeſs him to be our Lord.* Now this great ſimplicity, both of Scriptures and Fathers, in thoſe Articles of Belief which they propoſe to us as neceſſary to Salvation, may juſtly raiſe our aſtoniſhment at the imprudence (ſhall I call it, or malicious Wickedneſs?) of thoſe Men who have perplexed all Matters of Faith with ſo many inexplicable Difficulties. Not content with what the Scripture teaches of Chriſtianity, they have had recourſe to a *wordy Philoſophy*; thereby to refine their Notions, and adorn them with the luſtre of ſeemingly myſterious Expreſſions; Inſomuch that a great *Cardinal* has not ſtuck to acknowledg, That (*f*) *without the help of* Ariſtotle *we ſhould have wan-*

(*e*) Non per difficiles nos Deus ad beatam vitam quæſtiones vocat.——In abſoluto nobis & facili eſt Æternitas; Jeſum ſuſcitatum à mortuis per Deum credere, & ipſum eſſe Dominum confiteri. *Hilar. de Trin. lib.* 10.

(*f*) Senza Ariſtotele noi mancavamo di molti Articoli di fede. *Card. Palav.*

ted many Articles of Faith. And that which aggravates yet more the audacious extravagance of these Dogmatizers is, that they themselves acknowledg the incomprehensibility of those very things, which they undertake to explain with such critical Exactness, as if they had entred into the very Counsels, and fathomed the (g) *Depths, both of the Wisdom and Knowledg of God.* A most absurd Contradiction, and insupportable Presumption! I will not fear to apply unto them, what St. *Paul* says of some pretended Doctors in his Time, (h) that *having swerved from the Rule of Charity, they turned aside unto vain-jangling, desiring to be Teachers of the Law, though they understood neither what they said, nor whereof they affirmed.* And nothing can be more apposite to this Subject, than that Expostulation of St. *Austin*'s, where he demands, (i) *What need is there that those things should be either affirmed or deny'd, or so much as defined, (which cannot be done without danger) when they are such as without danger we may be ignorant of them?*

This

(g) *Rom.* 11.13. (h) 1 *Tim.* 1.6,7.

(i) Quid opus est ut vel affirmentur, vel negentur, vel cum discrimine definiantur, quæ sine Discrimine nesciuntur. *Aug. Enchir. ad Laur. c.* 59.

This vainly curious Spirit is very different from that of *Procopius*, the first Bishop of the *Goths*; who speaking of the over-nice Controversies that were then amongst Christians, declares that for his part, (*k*) *He esteems it a piece of absolute Folly and Madness, to pretend to penetrate with Critical Exactness, into the Nature of God.* And a little after, *Let me have liberty*, says he, *without blame, to be silent upon these Subjects. I, for my part, am able to say nothing more concerning the Nature of God, than that he is perfectly Good, and infinitely Powerful. He that thinks he knows any thing beyond this, whether he be Clerk or Laick, let him say it.* 'Tis an Example of admirable Modesty, and such an one as we ought strictly to imitate; especially in those Matters of Faith which surpass the Bounds of our Understanding. The surest way in those Cases, is to keep close to the express terms in

(*k*) Ἀπονόιας γὰρ μανιώδους πνὸς ἡγοῦμαι εἶναι, διερευνᾶσθαι τὴν τοῦ Θεοῦ φύσιν, ὁποία ποτὲ ἐστιν. ——Ἐμοὶ μὲν οὖν ταῦτα ἀκινδύνως σεσιωπήσθω. Ἐγὼ γὰρ οὐκ ἂν οὐδὲν ἄλλο περὶ Θεοῦ, ὅτι ἂν εἴποιμι, ἢ ὅτι ἀγαθός τε παντάπασιν εἴη, καὶ ξύμπαντα ὢν ἐξουσία τῇ αὐτοῦ ἔχει. Λέγετο δὲ ὅστις γινώσκειν ὤιετο αὐτῶν ὀιέσθω καὶ ἱερεὺς καὶ ἰδιώτης. Procop.

which things have been revealed, without either adding, diminishing, or changing the least *Iota*. This it is that St. *Paul* exhorts unto; (*l*) *That we hold fast the faithful Word as it hath been taught.* And again, (*m*) *That we hold fast the form of sound Words, which he delivered.* That, and *that only*, is certain and stable. *That* is the *True Faith*, for which *St.* Jude (*n*) *exhorts us to contend earnestly*: that, I mean, *which was once delivered to the Saints*: I say, that which was once delivered by *Jesus Christ and his Apostles*; not that which has been since invented, and broached for such, according to the different Humours and Interests of succeeding Ages. This is the sense of St. *Austin*; That (*o*) *we ought to believe stedfastly those things that are confirmed to us by the clear Authority of the Holy Scriptures: But that we may freely examine all other Evidences, upon which any thing is propounded*

(*l*) *Tit.* 1.9. (*m*) 2 *Tim.* 1.13. (*n*) *Jude* 3.

(*o*) Si divinarum Scripturarum perspicuâ firmetur Authoritate, sine ullâ dubitatione credendum est. Aliis vero testibus vel testimoniis quibus aliquid credendum esse suadetur, tibi credere vel non credere liceat; quantum ea momenti ad faciendam fidem habere vel non habere portenderis. *Aug. Epist.* 112. *ad Paulin.*

pounded to be believed; and either admit or reject them, according as we our selves judg them strong or weak. And in the same sense says *Clement* of *Alexandria*; (p) *We declare nothing but what is contained in the Scriptures.* And St. *Basil* affirms, (q) *That all things, both Words and Deeds, ought to be believed upon the Testimony of the Scriptures, that were divinely inspired.* And again, (r) *That it is a manifest Defection from the Faith, and the Mark of an extream Arrogance, either to reject any thing that is there written, or to add thereunto any thing that is not there written.* So that we have thus far the clear Authority, both of Scripture and Fathers, on our side; and from what has been said, may now safely conclude, That it is no less contrary to our Duty, than below the priviledg of our Reason, to suffer

(p) Οὐδὲν ἄτερ γραφῆς λέγομεν. *Clem. Alex. Strom. lib. 6.*

(q) Δεῖ πᾶν ῥῆμα πρᾶγμα πιστεύειν τῇ μαρτυρίᾳ τῆς θεοπνεύστου γραφῆς. *Bas. in Mor. Sum. Def. 26. cap. 1.*

(r) Φανερὰ ἔκπτωσις τῆς πίστεως καὶ ὑπερηφανίας κατηγορία ἢ ἀθετεῖν τι τῶν γεγραμμένων ἢ ἐπεισαγεῖν τῶν μὴ γεγραμμένων. *Basil. Hom. de fide.*

any New Articles of Faith, or even any Interpretation of Old Ones, to be imposed upon us by any Men; and least of all by those Men that have an apparent Interest in doing it.

Let us take Courage therefore, and chase away those vain Terrors that have too long surrounded us. Let us shake off the Tyranny of those Prejudices that have possest us. The Names of *Orthodox* and *Heretick* are known now to be too partial and illusory, any longer to deceive us. They have these many Ages been made use of with so much Irregularity, Interest, and Passion, that the ordinary application of them cannot at this day be any just ground, either of Assurance or Fear. Let those therefore that are so weak as to be either charmed or terrified with the empty sound of those words, say what they please; We may undoubtedly be assured that the Righteous Judg of all Men will not impute unto us the Guilt of any Criminal Heresy, so long as we sincerely believe what he has expresly revealed unto us. And if peradventure we understand not clearly the whole sense of every Expression, in which those things have been declared; we ought certainly, for that very Reason, so much the less presume to

to alter them, or affect new Forms of explaining our selves; and least of all, impose upon others any doubtful Inferences drawn from such dark Premisses.

The Essential Part of Religion consists not in Theory, but in Practice. *The Lord hath shewed thee, O Man,* saith the Prophet, (*s*) *what is good: And what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love Mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?* St. *James* gives us this plain description of it: (*t*) *Pure Religion, and undefiled before God the Father is this; To visit the Fatherless and Widows in their Affliction, and to keep our selves unspotted from the World.* And it is undoubtedly in consequence of this Principle, that the whole Tenure of the Scriptures declares unto us, that we shall *be judged*, not according to our *Belief*, but according to our *Works*. Witness abundance of (*u*) Passages both in the Old and New Testament; and most particularly that of St. *Paul*, where he says, (*w*) *That we must all appear before the Judgment-Seat of Christ, that every one may receive the Things done in his Body, according*

(*s*) *Mic.*6.8. (*t*) *Jam.*1.27. (*u*) *Eccles.*12.13, 14. *Jer.*17.10. *Jer.*32.19. *Psal.*62.12. *Mat.*16.27. *Mat.*25.34,&c. *Rom.*2.6,&c. *Rev.*2.23. *Rev.*20.12, 13. (*w*) 2 *Cor.*5.10.

according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad. Religion therefore lies not in imbracing this or that Opinion; in associating our selves with this or that Sect of Professors; in admiring or following this or that Doctor; no not even (x) *A Paul, an Apollos, or a Cephas.* But the only important Work of Religion is, (y) *to draw us off from that which is Evil, and to engage us in the practice of that which is Good.* And St. *John* accordingly enforces the Exhortation he makes us to do so, by this Mark of its importance; telling us, (z) that *He that doth Good is of God; but he that doth Evil, hath not seen God.*

Let us examine therefore what it is that *Right Reason* teaches us; whether it be to do *Good* or *Evil.* Let us consider whether it point out unto us a direct and sure way to future Happiness, or engage us in the Paths that lead to Destruction. For if in effect it be Reason that imprints upon our Minds any Notions of Irreligion, or that in any manner inclines us to Vice, we ought undoubtedly to reject it without the least hesitation. But if, on the contrary, it appear that True Reason be the only

(x) 1 *Cor.* 1. 12. 1 *Cor.*3.4,5. (y) *Psal.*34.14. *Isa.*1.16,17. *Am.*5.14,15. *Rom.*12.9. 1 *Pet.*3.11. (z) 3 *John* 11.

only Foundation, both of True Piety, and True Vertue; and that any Pretence, either to the one or the other, not built upon rational Principles, is in truth nothing else but Superstition or Hypocrisy; then certainly is it our Duty to make use of our Reason in Matters of Religion, as much, or even more, than in any thing else.

I will begin with the Consideration of the first Principles upon which all Religion in general is grounded. And I find them excellently touched by the Roman Orator: (*a*) *This* (says he) *is the first thing in which a People ought to be instructed*; Viz. *That there is a God, who is Soveraign Lord of the Universe; who disposes and governs all things by his Providence, with infinite Goodness towards the Sons of Men; who observes exactly every particular Man's Conduct; who sees the inmost*

(*a*) Sit igitur hoc jam à principio persuasum civibus, Dominos esse omnium rerum ac Moderatores Deos: eaq; quæ gerantur eorum geri judicio ac numine: eosdemq; optimè de genere hominum mereri; & qualis quisque sit, quid aget, quid in se admittat, quâ mente, quâ pietate religiones colat, intueri; piorumq; & impiorum habere rationem. *Cicer. de Leg. lib.* 2.

inmost Thoughts of our Hearts, and is not imposed upon by the specious Appearance of our Religious Performances; who distinguishes the Vertuous from the Wicked, and retributes unto each of them according to their Works. *Epictetus* in like manner, with his usual brevity, tells us that (*b*) *the most important thing in the business of Religion, is to settle in our Minds right Opinions concerning God; as that he is; and that he governs all things with beautiful Order, and exact Justice.*

It is true, that the word which I here translate *GOD*, in the *singular* number, is in the Original of these two Passages in the *plural*; from whence may be inferr'd that although the Heathen Philosophers did sometimes make mention of a Deity, yet their Notion of him was very absurd. But to this I answer; that they made use of the word *GOD* or *GODS*, indifferently in either number: Which will be evident by several Passages that I shall have occasion to quote by and by. Nay, many times they us'd it both ways in the very

(*b*) Τῆς περὶ τοὺς Θεοὺς εὐσεβείας ἴδοι ὅτι κυριώτατον ἐκεῖνο ἔστιν, ὀρθὰς ὑπολήψεις περὶ αὐτῶν ἔχειν, ὡς ὄντων, καὶ διοικούντων τὰ ὅλα καλῶς καὶ δικαίως. *Epict. Enchir. cap.* 38.

very same Period. So that we ought not to lay any stress upon their manner of expressing themselves, either the one way or the other; but to take their Notion of a Deity from their own Explanation of it. And then, surely, this very Passage of *Cicero* will not be found liable to any great Exception. I might easily produce abundance of other places to the same purpose; and shew further, that by their multitude of Gods, they intended only to express so many different Operations, by which the *One true God* manifested and made known himself unto Men. Thus *Aristotle* says that, (c) *Though God be but One; yet he is called by many Names, from the several Effects that he produces.* Thus also *Seneca*, speaking of the most ancient and ignorant Times says, (d) *That even then People were not so stupid as to believe that the*

(c) Εἷς δὲ ὢν, πολυώνυμος ἐστὶ καταονομαζόμενος τοῖς πάθεσι πᾶσιν ἅπερ αὐτὸς νεοχμεῖ. *Arist. de Mund.*

(d) Ne hoc quidem crediderunt, Jovem qualem in Capitolio & in ceteris ædibus colimus, mittere manu fulmina; sed eundem quem nos Jovem intelligunt, Custodem Rectoremq; Universi; Animum ac Spiritum; Mundani hujus operis Dominum & Artificem; cui nomen omne convenit. *Senec. Natur. Quæst. lib. 2. cap. 45.*

the Jupiter *whom they worshipped in the Capitol, and other Temples, did indeed with his Hands throw Thunderbolts. But by that Name* (says he) *they understood the same* Jupiter *that we do; a Soul or Spirit; the Maker and Preserver, the Lord and Governour of the whole Universe; unto whom any Name that expresses his different Operations* (as he goes on explaining it) *may be applied.* And again, in another place; (*e*) *You may apply unto God* (says he) *whatsoever Names you please, that express any manner of Heavenly Power and Effect. The Titles we give him may be as various as the Benefits we receive from him.* This I say was their general Conception of the Deity. Or if we will seek any further meaning of the multiplicity of their Gods, we shall find, at most, that they understood thereby only so many *Subordinate Powers*, *Angels*, *or Ministring-Spirits*; (much what as the generality of Christians now conceive of them) and that all the Worship they paid unto those inferior Deities was intended primarily

(*e*) Quæcunqne voles illi nomina propriè aptabis, vim aliquam effectumq; cælestem continentia. Tot appellationes ejus possunt esse, quot munera. *Senec. de Ben. lib.* 4. *cap.* 7.

marily (much what as some Christians also even now explain their worshipping of Saints and Angels) unto that *One Supream God*, whom they frequently stiled (*f*) *the Father and Governour both of all inferior Gods* (or Angels) *and Men.* And thus *Hierocles*, most expresly and fully: (*g*) *We are to believe those Gods* (says he) *to be what indeed they are, and to hold that Rank which indeed they hold; but we must direct all our Adoration to that only One God, who is the Maker of them all, and whom we may properly call the God of Gods, the best and greatest.* Much more might be added to this purpose: but it would be too great a Digression from my present Subject. And without insisting more particularly upon it, I doubt not but the Passages that I shall have occasion to quote, as I go on, will be abundantly satisfactory to those that will take the pains to observe and consider them.

I

(*f*) ——— Divûm Pater atq; hominum Rex. *Virg. Æn.* 1.

(*g*) Τȣ̃το ἀυτȣ̀ς εἶναι πίθεσθαι, ὃ γεγόνασι, καὶ τάυτλω ἔχειν τ̃ τάξιν, ἣν εἰλήχασιν, ὅπὶ τ̃ δημιȣργικὸν μόνον ἀυτῶν Θεὸν ἀναφέρειν τὸ σέβας, ὃν Θεὸν Θεῶν κυείως ἂν εἴποι τὶς, καὶ Θεὸν ὕπατον, καὶ ἄειςον. *Hieroc. in Carm. Pythag.*

I return therefore to the Consideration of the first Principles of all Religion. And I find that what is asserted by these Philosophers, is evidently the same thing that St. *Paul* himself intends, in saying (h) *That without Faith it is impossible to please God: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a Rewarder of them that diligently seek him.* Thus then the belief of a God, of his Providence, and of future Rewards and Punishments, is that Faith which is the true and only Foundation of all Religion. But the Foundation of that Belief lies in the perception we have of the Truth of those things, by that general Light, or Capacity of discerning, which is imparted to all Mankind. And there the same *Apostle* most clearly places it, when discoursing concerning the Gentiles, that lived before the coming of Jesus Christ, he says that (i) *That which might be known of God, was manifest in them: For the invisible things of him from the Creation of the World are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his Eternal Power and Godhead, so that they are without Excuse.* The same Conclusion is also drawn by St. *Gregory* from the particular Consideration of the Na-

(h) *Rom.* 11. 6. (i) *Rom.* 1. 19, 20.

Nature of Man. And indeed there is nothing in Nature which, if it be duly considered, does not irresistibly force us to make the same Inference. (k) *Every Man*, says he, *in that he is made a Rational Creature, ought by the Light of his own Reason to conclude, that he who made him is God.* And St. *Austin*, speaking of the Platonick Philosophers, and representing the Argumentations by which they searched into the Nature of God, says, that (l) *Whatsoever can be known of God he himself manifested unto them; for the invisible things of him were seen and understood by them, from the things that are made.* And he is so penetrated with this Truth, that in another place, he professes, (m) *He could easilier doubt of his own Life and Existence, than of the Truth of those things, that are made evident to our Understanding by the Works of the Creation.* In

C effect,

(k) Omnis homo, in eo ipso quod rationalis conditus est, ex ipsâ ratione illum qui se condidit Deum esse colligere debet. *S. Greg. in Mor.*

(l) Quod notum est Dei, ipse manifestavit eis; cum ab eis invisibilia ejus, per ea quæ facta sunt, intellecta conspecta sunt. *Aug. Civit. lib.* 8. *cap.* 6.

(m) Faciliùs dubitarem vivere me, quàm non esse veritatem quæ per ea quæ facta sunt intellecta conspicitur. *Aug. Conf. lib.* 7. *cap.* 10.

effect, if we be not first convinced of the Existence of a Deity, by Proofs suitable to our Natural Faculties, it is impossible for us to attain unto any true Knowledg, either of Religion, or (I think I may say) of any thing whatsoever. This is now generally acknowledged both by Philosophers and Divines. And particularly one of no mean Rank in both those Professions, and whom I the rather mention, because he is of that Communion which allows the least liberty of Ratiocination, says expresly that, (n) *All the Certainty we can have in Matters of Faith, depends upon that Knowledg that we have, by Reason, of the Existence of God.* Thus then we see one inestimable Advantage derived to us by the use of Reason, and a powerful Argument in favour of what I am pleading for; in that it is *by Reason only* that we are made capable to lay the first Foundation of all Religion, which is the certain knowledg of the Existence of a God.

Let

(n) La Connoissance de la cause universelle, ou de l'existence d'un Dieu, est absolument necessaire; puisque mesme la certidude de la foy depend de la Connoissance que la Raison donne de l'existence d'un Dieu. *Malebr. Recherch. de la Ver. lib. 4. cap. 6.*

Let us now ſee if the Superſtructure be conformable to this Foundation; I mean, if that Reaſon which gives us the Evidence we have of the Exiſtence of a Deity, be capable alſo to guide us in ſuch ways as are agreeable to him.

I will begin this Enquiry among the Heathen Philoſophers. And there immediately I meet with both *Plutarch*, and *Hierocles*, uſing this ſame ſtrong and clear Expreſſion, that (*o*) *to ſubmit our ſelves to the Conduct of Reaſon, is in effect the very ſame thing as to obey God.* Like unto which is that of *Antoninus* the Emperor, where he ſays, that (*p*) *the Mind of Man being an Emanation of the Divinity, every Man's own Mind ought to be a God unto himſelf.* And in another place, the ſame *Antoninus* counſels us to (*q*) *look inwards*; *for within us* (ſays he) *is a Fountain of Good, that will always flow, if we do but always dig and cleanſe it.* 'Tis upon the ſame Principle that *Seneca* alſo builds, when

(*o*) Ταυτὸν ἔστι τὸ ἕπεσθαι Θεῷ καὶ τὸ πείθεσθαι λόγῳ. *Plutar. de Audit. Officio.* Λόγῳ δὲ ὀρθῷ πείθεσθαι, καὶ Θεῷ, ταυτὸν ἔστι. *Hier. in Carm. Pythag.*

(*p*) Ὁ ἐκάστου νοῦς Θεὸς, καὶ ἐκεῖθεν ἐρρύηκε. *Anton. de ſeipſo lib.* 12.

(*q*) Ἔνδον βλέπε. Ἔνδον ἡ πηγὴ τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ, καὶ ἀεὶ ἀναβλύσειν δυναμένη, ἐὰν ἀεὶ σκάπτῃς. *Ant. de ſeipſo lib.* 7.

he says, that (r) *he makes it his Rule to follow Nature; and that it is a Point of highest Wisdom to tread in her Paths, to obey her Law, and to form our selves according to her Model.* And in another place, having rejected the Authority and Example of other Men, in a Point relating to Happiness: (s) *I have* (says he) *a more clear and certain Light, by which I am able to discern Truth from Error. It is the Mind of Man that is most capable to judg of his own Good.* Agreeable whereunto are also those Expressions of *Cicero*, that (t) *it is impossible to err so long as we follow the Guidance of Nature.* That (u) *Vertue is nothing else but Nature advanced to her highest degree of Perfection.* And that (w) *there is no Man, of any Nation whatsoever, who*

(r) Rerum Naturæ assentior; ab illâ non deerrare, ad illius legem exemplumq; formari, sapientia est. *Senec. de Vit. beat. cap.* 3.

(s) Habeo melius certiusq; lumen, quo à falsis vera dijudicem: animi bonum animus inveniat. *Senec. de Vit. beat. cap.* 2.

(t) Naturâ duce errari nullo pacto potest. *Cicer. de leg. lib.* 1.

(u) Est autem virtus nihil aliud quàm in se perfecta, & ad summum perducta Natura. *Ibid.*

(w) Nec est quisquam, gentis ullius, qui ducem Naturam nactus, ad virtutem pervenire non possit. *Ibid.*

who following the Conduct of Nature, may not attain to Vertue. Heirocles in like manner teaches, that *in* (x) *the knowledg of our selves, and of those things that are suitable to the Reasonable Nature, are every where to be found infallible Directions of Duty.* And again, that (y) *if we look into the Nature of our Beings for the Rule of our Actions, we shall easily discern our Duty in all occasions.* It would be endless to quote all that these Philosophers have said upon this Subject. They speak ordinarily of Reason as of a Beam of the Divinity. (z) *God has given to every Man,* says Antoninus, *a Portion or Participation of himself, for Guide and Leader, which consists in every Mans Mind or Reason. What* (a) *is there,*

(x) Οὕτω τῇ ἑαυτῶν γνώσει καὶ ἀπαξιώσει τοῦ μὴ πρεπόντων λογικῇ φύσει, ἡ τοῦ καθηκόντων ἀπαγγελόντος θήρησις εὑρίσκεται πανταχοῦ. *Hieroc.*

(y) Πρὸς κανόνα τοῦ ὄντος ἀποβλέποντες τὸν δεῖνα ἐν πᾶσιν εὑρίσκομεν. *Hieroc.*

(z) Ἑκάστῳ προσάτου καὶ ἡγεμόνα ὁ Ζεὺς ἔδωκεν, ἀπόσπασμα ἑαυτοῦ, οὗτος δὲ ἐστὶν ὁ ἑκάστου νοῦς καὶ λόγος. *Anton. de seip. lib.* 5.

(a) Quid est autem, non dicam in homine, sed in omni Cœlo atq; Terrâ Ratione divinius? Quæ cum adolescit, atq; perfecta est, vocatur rectè sapientia. Est igitur, quoniam nihil est Ratione melius, eaq; & in homine & in Deo, prima hominis cum Deo Rationis Societas. *Cicer. de leg. lib.* 1.

says Cicero, *not in Man only, but either in Heaven or Earth, more Divine than Reason? Which, when grown up to Perfection, is rightly stiled Wisdom. Since therefore nothing is more excellent than Reason, and that both God and Man partake of it, Reason is the principal Bond of Communion or Society between God and Man.* Nothing can be more express and lively, than what is said to this purpose by *Seneca*, in a thousand places, and thus particularly, that (*b*) *We are not to lift up our Hands to Heaven, nor to beg leave from the Keepers of the Temples, that they may suffer us to approach to the Ears of the sacred Images, as if our Prayers would be there more easily heard. No,* says he, *God is near unto thee, he is with thee, he is within thee. Yes,* Lucilius, *there is a Holy Spirit dwells within us, who observes and watches over our good and evil Actions, and who deals with us accordingly as we deal with him.* And

(*b*) Non sunt ad Cœlum elevandæ manus, nec exorandus Ædituus ut nos ad aures simulacri, quasi magis exaudiri possimus, admittat. Propè est ad te Deus, tecum est, intus est. Ita dico, Lucili, sacer intra nos Spiritus sedet, malorum bonorumq; nostrorum Observator & Custos. Hic prout à nobis tractatus est, ita nos ipse tractat. *Senec. Epist.* 41.

And again, to the same purpose, (c) *We are not to wonder that God suffers Men to aproach unto him. He himself comes unto Men: Nay, what is nearer, he comes into Men. God dwells in every excellent Mind. There are Divine Seeds sown in our Human Bodies, which if we cultivate as we ought to do, the Fruits they produce will be answerable to the Original from whence they spring.* And else where more succinctly. (d) *Reason is nothing else but a Portion of the Divine Spirit, infused into our Human Bodies.* Conformable to which is that Expression of *Epicharmus*, that (e) *the Reason of Mankind proceeds from the Reason of God.* And that of the Poet *Aratus*, whose Authority is so much the greater by the Citation that (f) St. *Paul* makes of him, saying that

(c) Miraris hominem ad Deos ires? Deus ad homines venit, imò (quod propriùs est) in homines venit. Nulla sine Deo Mens bona est. Semina in corporibus humanis Divina dispersa sunt, quæ si bonus Cultor excipit, similia origini prodeunt, & paria his ex quibus orta sunt surgunt. *Senec. Ep.* 73.

(d) Ratio nihil aliud est quàm in corpus humanum pars divini spiritus mersa. *Senec. Ep.* 66.

(e) Ὁ δὲ γ' τ' ἀνθρώπῳ λόγος πέφυκ' ἀπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ λόγου. *Epichar.*

(f) *Acts* 17. 28.

(*g*) *we are the Off-spring of God.* Nay, it is certain that many of these Philosophers have not been far from that true Idea of the Divine Reason, which St. *John* gives us in the beginning of his Gospel. We see that in *Tertullian*, who says, that (*h*) *they believed it was the Word, or Reason, that framed the Universe.* And (*i*) *Lactantius* also confirms the same thing; adding further, that *the Term* Λόγος, *which the Greeks made use of, signifying the Reason or Wisdom of God, was more proper in that occasion, than that of* Verbe, *or* Word, *unto which the Latin and Modern Authors confine themselves.*

But the force of these Philosophical Authorities will yet better appear, if we observe further: (In the first place) That these Philosophers have indifferently made use of the terms either of *Nature*, or

(*g*) Τοῦ γὰρ καὶ γένος ἐσμέν. *Arat.*

(*h*) Apud vestros quoque sapientes Λόγον, id est sermonem atq; Rationem, constat Artificem videri Universitatis. *Tert. adv. gent.*

(*i*) Meliùs Græci Λόγον dicunt quam nos Verbum, sive sermonem. Λόγος enim & sermonem significat & rationem: quia ille est vox & sapientia Dei. Hunc sermonem divinum ne Philosophi quidem ignoraverunt. Siquidem Zenon rerum Naturæ Dispositorem, atq; Opificem Universitatis, λόγον prædicat, &c. *Lact. lib. 4. n. 9.*

or of *Right Reason*; and that they have always understood the same thing by both those Expressions; witness that place of *Juvenal*, where he says, that (*k*) *Nature and Wisdom do never differ in their Injunctions*; And that of the Emperour Antoninus, (*l*) *In a Rational Creature, the same Action that is according to Nature, is according to Reason*; And (in the next place) if we take notice, That these same Philosophers have unanimously agreed in teaching, not only that Right Reason was capable to guide us in the Practice of Vertue, but also that our Happiness depends intirely upon our Obedience to its Lessons. Nothing is more ordinary than that in all their Writings. The same Poet has told us, that (*m*) *it is impossible for a wicked Man to be happy*; and that on the contrary, (*n*) *Vertue is the only way that leads to Happiness*. But the words of *Aristotle*, on this Subject, are very full; exhorting Men

---

(*k*) Nunquam aliud Natura, aliud sapientia dicit. *Juv. Sat.* 14.

(*l*) Τῷ λογικῷ ζώῳ ἡ αὐτὴ πρόοδος κατὰ φύσιν ἐστὶ καὶ κατὰ λόγον. *Ant. de suip. lib.* 7.

(*m*) Nemo malus felix. *Juv. Sat.* 4.

(*n*) ——————Semita certè
Tranquillæ per virtutem patet unica vitæ.
Juv. Sat. 10.

Men to live suitably to the Divine Law of their Minds, (o) *We ought not* (says he) *as some advise, because we are Men and Mortal, to set our Hearts upon Human and Mortal Things; but as much as possible, to raise our selves above Mortality; and do all things as becomes that part of our Nature which is the most excellent*, &c. And afterwards, *for whatsoever is proper to the Nature of any Being, is the best for that Being. That therefore is the best Life for a Man, which is led in Conformity to the Law of our Mind; because the Mind is the chief Part of the Man; and by consequence that Life is the happiest.* And in another place; (p) *He that takes care to cultivate his Mind, and acts suitably to its Dictates, he is in the best Disposition that is possible, and in all appearance is beloved of God*; for which he gives many Rea-

(o) Χρὴ δὲ ὡς, φασὶ τοὺς παραινοῦντας, ἀνθρώπινα φρονεῖν ἀνθρωπον ὄντα, ὡδὲ θνητὰ θνητὸν, ἀλλ' ἐφ' ὅσον ἐνδέχεται ἀπαθανατίζειν, καὶ πάντα ποιεῖν πρὸς τὸ ζῆν κατὰ τὸ κράτιστον τῶν ἐν αὐτῷ.—— Τὸ γὰρ οἰκεῖον ἑκάστῳ τῇ φύσει κράτιστον καὶ ἥδιστον ἑκάστῳ; καὶ τῷ ἀνθρώπῳ δὴ ὁ κατὰ τὸν νοῦν βίος, εἴπερ μάλιστα τοῦτο ἀνθρωπος, ὅτις ἄρα καὶ εὐδαιμονέστατος. *Arist. Ethic. lib.* 10. *cap.* 9.

(p) Ὁ δὲ κατὰ νοῦν ἐνεργῶν, καὶ τοῦτον θεραπεύων, καὶ διακείμενος ἄριστα, καὶ θεοφιλέστατος ἔοικεν εἶναι. *Arist. Ethic. lib.* 10. *cap.* 9.

Reasons, and concludes therfore, That *such an one is also most Happy.* Thus also *Seneca* most divinely expresses himself to the same purpose. (q) *Art thou desirous to have God propitious to thee? be Good. The best Worship thou canst render him, is to imitate him.* And *Cicero*, in the very same Sense, (r) *The Favour of God is to be obtain'd by Piety and Holiness.*

Let it not be said, that the Happiness which these Philosophers discourse of, relates only to this Life; and that they had not that prospect of a future Felicity, which animates us Christians to our Duty. I know not what can be said more strong or sound, both concerning that future State, and the Way that leads to it, than some Passages of theirs, with which I will conclude this Classis of Heathen Authorities. (s) *When I consider* (says Cicero) *the wonderful quickness and reach*

(q) Vis Deos propitiare? Bonus esto. Satis illos coluit quisquis imitatus est. *Senec. Ep.* 95.

(r) Deos placatos pietas efficiet & sanctitas. *Cic. de Offic. lib.* 2.

(s) Sic mihi persuasi sic sentio: cum tanta celeritas sit animorum; tanta memoria præteritorum, futurorumq; prudentia; tot artes, tot scientiæ, tot inventa; non posse eam naturam quæ eas res contineat esse mortalem. Cumq; animus semper agitetur, nec principium motus habeat, quia ipse se moveat; nec finem quidem habiturum esse mo-

reach of our Minds; the strange Memory that we have of Things past, and foresight of Things to come; When I reflect on Arts and Sciences, and the variety of Humane Inventions; I am fully convinced and satisfied, that a Being which is capable of all these Things, cannot be mortal. And since the Mind is always moved, and has no other Principle of Motion but it self, it will certainly never cease to move, because it can never cease to be with it self. Since also it is simple, unmixed, and hath nothing in it different from it self, it can therefore never be divided, and consequently never perish. Thus he, concerning the Immortality of the Soul. And in another place, concerning Happiness: (*t*) *God* (says he) *is the Beginning and End of all Things; and whosoever constantly follows his Direction, and Government, cannot fail to be happy.* And elsewhere again, yet more expressly, he sets down the very words of their Ancient Laws concerning

tus, quia nunquam se ipse sit relicturus. Et cum simplex animi sit natura, neque habeat in se quidquam admistum, dispar sui, atque dissimile, non posse eum dividi; quod si non possit, non posse interire. *Cicer. de Offic. lib.* 1.

(*t*) Deus principium & finis omnium rerum, cujus ductum & auspicium qui constanter persequitur, felix evadet. *Cic. de leg. lib.* 4.

cerning Religion, in which (*u*) *Wisdom, Vertue, Piety, and Faith,* are reckoned up as the Things which *procure Men an entrance into Heaven.* Agreeable unto which is that of *Seneca*; where speaking of *Scipio* stiled the *African,* he declares that (*w*) *He believes his Soul was returned into Heaven, from whence it came: not because he had led and commanded great Armies, (for that the furious* Cambyses *had also done, and even with success) but because of his great Moderation and Piety.* And thus *Horace* also expresses himself, (as indeed so do generally all, both Philosophers and Poets) saying, That it is (*x*) *Vertue which opens the Gate of Heaven, to those that are worthy of Immortality.*

I have insisted the longer upon the Expressions of those Ancient Philosophers, because

(*u*) Olla propter quæ datur homini ascensus in Cœlum, Mentem, Virtutem, Pietatem, Fidem, &c. *Cic. de leg. lib.* 2.

(*w*) Animum quidem ejus in Cœlum, unde erat, rediisse persuadeo mihi: non quia magnos exercitus duxit (hoc enim Cambyses furiosus, ac furore feliciter usus, habuit) sed ob egregiam Moderationem Pietatemq; *Senec. Epist.* 86.

(*x*) Virtus recludens immeritis mori Cœlum. ——*Hor. Carm. lib.* 3. *Od.* 2.

because they have not only the Force of so many Authorities, but carry with them an evident demonstration of the Thing it self for which I produce them. 'Tis not only their saying, that the Mind of Man is endowed with a measure of Light, capable to direct his Paths in the Way to Happiness, that may induce the belief of it; but 'tis that Light it self which shines forth in their Discourses, who had not the advantage of Supernatural Revelations, that shows its Diffusion to be general amongst all Mankind. *They saw the Being of a God; the Duty of adoring him; the Immortality of the Soul; and the necessity of leading a vertuous Life here, in order to the obtaining of a happy Estate hereafter.* With these Thoughts they were inflamed, and by the direction of these Truths they steered the course of their Actions. I cannot forbear to add here one Instance of their Fervor, unto those that I have already quoted of their positive Doctrine. 'Tis from *Hierocles* that I will borrow it. (*y*) *This* (says he) *is the End of all Pythagorical Instruction, that it*

(*y*) Τοῦτο τ̃ Πυθαγορικῆς ἀγωγῆς τὸ πέρας, ὅλους δι' ὅλων ὑποπτέρους γένεσθαι πρὸς τ̃ τ̃ θείων ἀγαθῶν μετά-

it may give us Wings, and inflame our Desires *after the participation of Heavenly Blessings; and that when the Hour of Death shall approach, those who have been Contenders in the Exercises of Philosophy, putting off this Nature, and leaving on Earth this Mortal Body, may be the more expedite, and better prepar'd for their Heavenly Journey.* I will say no more. I wish we Christians, who pretend to a greater measure of Light than they had, could demonstrate the Truth of it by so much a greater conformity of our Lives thereunto. I wish it were so; but refer it to others to examine, whether or no indeed it be so.

To these Ancient Philosophers, may not unfitly be subjoined the Testimony of the *Turks*, and other Nations that we now call *Barbarous*. If we may credit the Account that Sir *Paul Rycaut* gives us of the *Turks*, whatever be the Differences amongst their Doctors, and the super-

---

μεταλήψιν, ἵν' ὅταν ὁ τῆς θανάτου καιρὸς ἐνεστῇ, καταλιπόντες ὅπῃ γῆς τὸ θνητὸν σῶμα, καὶ τῷ τούτου φύσιν ἀποδυσάμενοι, πρὸς τῷ ἐρανίαν πορείαν ὦσιν εὐζωνοι οἱ τῆς φιλοσοφίας ἀγώνων ἀθληταί. *Hier. in Carm. Pythag.*

superstitious Extravagancies that are mixed with their Religion, (as alas there is more or less of such mixture in every Profession) yet the fundamental Article of Faith, requisite with them to make a true Believer, is only this; *That there is but One God, and that* Mahomet *was his Prophet.* And how they agree with all Mankind, in the universal Principle of Natural Religion, is evident by the Text of the *Alcoran* it self, which says expresly; (y) That *every one that lives as he ought to do, whether he be* Jew *or* Christian, *or whether he have forsaken one Profession to embrace another; every one, in plain terms, that adores God, and does the Thing that is Good, shall undoubtedly obtain the Love of God.* There is Foundation-Work. I will not weary the Reader with any Collection out of the ordinary Voyages of Travellers, concerning that general Sense of Religion, however differently corrupted, that is found amongst the most barbarous Nations of both the *Indies:*

(y) Sciendum autem generalitèr, quoniam omnis recte vivens, Judæus seu Christianus, seu lege suâ relictâ in aliam tendens, omnis scilicet Deum adorans boniq; gestor, indubitanter divinum amorem assequetur. *Alcoran Azoara*, 2.

Indies. They all have a Sense and Dread of a Supream Being, from whom they expect Rewards or Punishments, according to their Demerits. But I have lately met with some such excellent and apposite Passages, taken out of the Works of the famous *Chinesian* Philosopher, *Confucius*, (who, by the Account of those People, lived about five hundred Years before Christ) that I cannot forbear to transcribe a few words out of them. (z) *He exhorts his Disciples to persevere constantly in the Soveraign Good; that is to say, in the perfect conformity of their Actions unto the Rule of Right Reason.* And in another place, *The Heavenly Principle in Man* (says he) *is called Reasonable Nature. What is conformable to Nature and Reason, is called Rule or Law. And the establishment of that Rule, by the application we make of it to our selves, in governing our Passions, is called Morality or Vertue. This Rule, being essential to the Humane Nature, neither ought nor can be separated from Man, so much as for one moment: because if it could be separated from us, it would not be that Rule or Reason which*

(z) Biblioth. Univers. To. 7.

God has united to our Nature. This is a plain Assertion of the Light that enlightens every Man that comes into the World. And how clearly that Light shone in him, will appear by the Explication he gives of that Axiom; *Not to do unto others what we would not that they should do unto us. The Rule of Reason,* (says he) *which comprehends the reciprocal Duties of King and Subjects, of Parents and Children, of Husband and Wife, of Young and Old, of Friends, and of all People that have any manner of Converse or Dealing with one another, is not above the Capacity of any one. But the Maxims which some People have invented, and which they term Sublime, and above the ordinary reach; certain strange and abstruse Principles, that have no affinity with any of the above-mentioned Relations in which Men stand towards one another; Such Doctrines as these* (says he) *cannot be accounted amongst the Rules of Reason.* One would think he were prophetically censuring some of our curious Systematical Creed-makers. But he goes on: *There are four Rules which a perfect Man endeavours to observe, though I for my part scarce keep any one of them as I ought to do.* (What Modesty, what Humility!) *1st, To pay the same Duty to my Parents,*

that

that I require from my Children. 2*ly*, *To bear the same Fidelity to my Prince, that I desire in my Servants.* 3*ly*, *To carry the same Respect towards those that are Elder than my self, that I expect from those that are Younger.* 4*ly*, *To have the same Zeal for the Interest of my Friends, that I desire they should have for mine; and to prevent them in all manner of good Offices, as I wish they should prevent me.* He goes on much more amply, and no less excellently. But I must not abuse the Reader's patience. Only I desire, as before, that these things may not be considered simply as the bare Authorities of these Persons concerning the Light of Nature; but much more, as real Instances and Examples of that very Light which shone in them, and directed them, without extraordinary Revelation, to the same Duties that have been further enjoined us by Revelation.

Let us consider, in the next place, the Opinion of the *Jews* upon this Argument. How much soever they valued themselves upon the extraordinary Authority of their own Law, yet they also extoll'd the Advantages of that Universal Light of Reason, which is the natural Law of Mankind, even as much as did the *Pagans*; and they que-

stioned not the future Felicity of those that faithfully observed it. Thus we find *Philo* expressing himself on that Subject, in this elevated Strain. (*a*) *Right Reason* (says he) *is an Infallible Rule and Law of Truth; not derived from any mortal Principle, not subject to Alteration or Corruption, not written upon inanimate Papers or Stones; but proceeding from an Immortal Being, and engraven in an Immortal Understanding, its Force is Unchangeable and Eternal.* But the words of *Trypho* are yet more strong; where he tells *Justin Martyr*, That (*b*) *if he had persisted in the way of Philosophy, there would have been hopes that he might have attained to a happy Estate.* It is true indeed, that he thereby reproaches *Justin* with his Conversion to Christianity. But at the same time he allows hopes of Salvation to a *Pagan*, in conducting himself according to the Natural Reasonings of Philo-

(*a*) Νόμος ἢ ἀληθὴς ὁ ὀρθὸς λόγος, οὐχ ὑπὸ τοῦ δεῖνος ἢ τοῦ δεῖνος θνητοῦ φθαρτὸς ἐν χαρταῖς ἢ στήλαις ἀψύχοις, ἀλλ' ὑπ' ἀθανάτου φύσεως ἄφθαρτος ἐν ἀθανάτῳ διανοίᾳ τυπωθεῖς. *Phil. Omn. vir. bon. liber.*

(*b*) Μένοντι σοὶ ἐν ἐκείνῳ τῷ φιλοσοφίας τρόπῳ ἐλπὶς ὑπολείπετο ἀμείνονος μοίρας. *Just. Col. cum Tryph.*

Philosophy. *Rabbi Maimonides* has very many Expressions to this purpose, in his *Book of Idolatry*; and most particularly in his *Commentary ad Misnaioth*, he affirms, That *those Gentiles who feared God, and were truly vertuous, should be made partakers of the Blessings of the Life to come.* But it is needless to enumerate many Testimonies of this sort. A little reflection upon the Scriptural History of the First Ages of the World, will furnish us Instances of this kind abundantly sufficient. We read there of an *Abel*, an *Enoch*, a *Noah*, a *Lot*, an *Abraham*, a *Melchisedec*, and others; to whom we may also add a *Job*, who (according to the Opinion of (*c*) *Eusebius* and (*d*) *Origen*) lived long before the publication of the Law by *Moses*. These are generally honoured with this praise, that *they walked with God, and were accepted by him*; and *Job* particularly, (*e*) That *he was a perfect and upright Man, fearing God, and eschewing Evil:* Or, in the words of *Eusebius*, That *the whole conduct of his Life was conformable to the Evangelical Doctrine of our Saviour.* Which is an evident proof

(*c*) Euseb. Demonstr. Evang. lib. 1.
(*d*) Orig. contra Cels. lib. 1. (*e*) *Job* 1. 8.

that they were not destitute of such a degree of Light, as was necessary for their Conduct; and that the same Holy Law, which was afterwards delivered, either by *Moses* or *Christ*, was even then written in their Hearts.

As for the *Fathers of the Christian Church*, the most part of them are not less clear in this Opinion, than those other Authors that I have already cited. (*e*) *I maintain*, (says Tertullian) *that before the Law of* Moses, *which was written on Tables of Stone, there was an unwritten Law which Men naturally understood, and which was observed by the Ancient Fathers.* And again, (*f*) *Why do you make such enquiry after the Law of God*, (as an obscure or unknown Thing) *seeing you have that Common Law, which is published to all the World in the Tables of Nature?* Clement of Alexandria quoting the Sermon of St. *Peter*, which was then in the hands of Christians, (and which it seems he

(*e*) Ante legem Mosis scriptam in tabulis Lapideis, legem fuisse contendo non scriptam, quæ naturaliter intelligebatur, & à patribus custodiebatur. *Tert. adv. Judæos.*

(*f*) Quæres igitur Dei legem, habens communem istam in publico mundi, in naturalibus tabulis? *Tert. de Coronâ militis.*

he esteemed to be genuine) delivers both as St. *Peter*'s and his own Sense; That (g) *the only one true God has been made known unto the* Grecians, *after the manner of the* Gentiles; *unto the* Jews, *after the manner of the* Jews; *and unto us* Christians, *after a new and spiritual manner; and that the same God, who is the Author of both the Alliances, is he that gave their Philosophy unto the* Grecians, *by whom accordingly he was glorified.* And again; speaking of those that lived before the coming of Jesus Christ, he says, That (h) *it would be a very unjust thing to condemn them promiscuously, without hearing their Defence; and to think that none have partaked of the Heavenly Justice, but those that live under the Gospel-Dispensation.* The whole Sense of this Discourse intimates, that God has in all Ages given sufficient Means unto all People, for the

(g) Σαφῶς γὰρ, οἶμαι, ἐδήλωσεν ἕνα καὶ μόνον Θεὸν, καὶ τὸ μὲ Ἑλλήνων ἐθνικῶς, καὶ τὸ τῶν Ἰουδαίων Ἰουδαικῶς, καινῶς τε καὶ ὑφ' ἡμῶν, καὶ πνευματικῶς, γινωσκόμενον. Περὶ τε καὶ ὅτι ὁ αὐτὸς Θεὸς ἀμφοῖν τοῖν διαθήκαιν χορηγὸς, ὁ καὶ τὴν Ἑλληνικῆς φιλοσοφίας δωτὴρ τοῖς Ἕλλησι δεδόξασται, παρέστησεν. *Clem. Alex. Strom. lib. 6.*

(h) Οὐ γὰρ πᾶν θέμις, τοὺς μὲ ἀκεί τως καταδικάζειν, μονοὺς τε τοὺς κατὰ τὸν παρεσίαν, τὴν θείας ἀπολελαυκέναι δικαιοσύνης. *Clem. Alex. Strom. lib. 6.*

working out of their Salvation. And *Justin the Martyr*, in like manner, teaches, That (*i*) *Christ is the First-born of God; the Word or Reason, of which all Men are in a degree made partakers; and that therefore all Men who have lived conformably to the Dictates of that Reason, (even* Pagans *themselves) are in effect to be reputed* Christians. *Such amongst the* Grecians *were* Socrates *and others.* Many other of the Fathers were also of the same Opinion. St. *Austin* is very favourable in his Judgment of the *Platonick* Philosophers, and particularly approves their Opinion, in that they said, (*k*) *The same God that made all Things, is himself the Light of our Minds, by which we are enabled to learn and understand all Things.* And else-where, expressing his own Sense, he says, That *there*

(*i*) Τὸν Χριστὸν πρωτότοκον τοῦ Θεοῦ εἶναι ἐδιδάχθημεν, καὶ προσεμηνύσαμεν λόγον ὄντα, οὗ πᾶν γένος ἀνθρώπων μετέχει, καὶ οἱ μετὰ λόγου βιώσαντες Χριστιανοὶ εἰσι, κἂν ἄθεοι, ἐνομισθήσαν, οἷον ἐν Ἕλλησι μὲν Σωκράτης, &c. *Just. Mart. Apol.* 2.

(*k*) Lumen autem mentium esse dixerunt ad discenda omnia, eundem ipsum Deum à quo facta sunt omnia. *Aug. Civit. lib.* 8. *Cap.* 7.

(l) there is no Man, how corrupt soever he be, if endowed with the least degree of Reason, in whose Conscience God does not speak. For who is it but God himself that writes the Natural Law in the Hearts of Men? concerning which the Apostle speaks, (Rom. 2. 14.) *saying, That when the* Gentiles *which have not the Law, do by Nature the Things contained in the Law,* &c. And a little after; *The Rational Soul of Man, even though it be blinded by Lusts and Passions, yet (since it thinks and reasons) whatsoever there is of Truth in its Reasonings, is not to be attributed simply to the Soul it self, but to the Light of Truth, by which it is still in some measure illuminated, according to the degree of its Capacity, and inabled to discern the Truth that is in those Reasonings.*

(*l*) Nullam esse Animam, quamvis perversam, quæ tamen ullo modo ratiocinari potest, in cujus Conscientiâ non loquatur Deus. Quis enim scribit in Cordibus hominnm naturalem Legem nisi Deus? De quâ lege Apostolus ait (*Rom.* 2. 14.) Cum Gentes, *&c.*———Hominis Anima rationalis, etiam cupiditate cæcata, tamen cum cogitat & ratiocinatur, quicquid in eâ ratiocinatione verum est non ei tribuendum est, sed ipsi lumini veritatis, à quo vel tenuiter pro sui capacitate illustratur, ut verum aliquod in ratiocinando sentiat. *Aug. de Serm. Dom. in monte.*

sonings. And again, in another place, (*m*) *Truth*, says he, *thou art every where near to those that consult thee; and thou giveſt anſwer to every one, how different ſoever be their Enquiries. Thou indeed anſwereſt diſtinctly, but every one does not hear diſtinctly. Men conſult thee in all Places, but they do not always hear what they deſire. He is thy beſt Diſciple, who is not ſo much concerned to hear from thee what he deſires, as to comply with, and be obedient unto what he hears.* St. *Chryſoſtom* diſcourſes admirably concerning the Salvation of the *Pagans*, in his 12*th* and 13*th* Books *de Statutis*; in his 38*th* Homily on St. *Matthew*; and upon that place of St. *Paul* to the *Romans*, (Chap. 2. Ver. 14, 15.) ſpeaking concerning the Knowledg which the *Gentiles* were capable of, he ſays, That it was (*n*) *by their Natural Reason-*

(*m*) Ubique Veritas præſides omnibus conſulentibus te, ſimulq; reſpondes omnibus etiam diverſa conſulentibus. Liquidè tu reſpondes, ſed non liquidè omnes audiunt. Omnes undè volunt conſulunt, ſed non ſemper quod volunt audiunt. Optimus Miniſter tuus eſt, qui non magis intuetur hoc à te audire quod ipſe voluerit, ſed potius hoc velle quod à te audierit. *Aug. Conf. lib.* 10. *cap.* 26.

(*n*) Τοῖς τῆ φύσεως λογισμοῖς.——Ἀρκεῖ ἀντὶ τοῦ νόμου τὸ συνειδὸς καὶ λογισμός. *Chryſ. in Rom. cap.* 2.

Reasonings that they attained to it. And a little after adds, That *our Conscience and Reason are sufficient to serve us for a Law.* Origen also teaches, That (o) *there are two sorts of Laws, the one Natural, of which God himself is the Author; the other written, which may be of Authority in Civil Governments and Societies of Men, so far as it is not repugnant to the Natural Law of God. But,* says he, *if it be fitting that we prefer our Natural Reason, which is the very Law of God, before any written Law that has been instituted by Men, contrary to the sense of that Divine Law; how much more fitting is it that we do so in relation to the Laws that concern Religion, or the Worship of God?* Lactantius seems ravish'd with the Expressions of *Cicero*, upon the Subject of this Natural Law; and chuses therefore to give his own Sense thereof, in that Author's words. He does it so excellently, that though the

(o) Δύο τοίνων νόμων προκειμένων γνικῶς, καὶ τοῦ μὲν ὄντος τῆς φύσεως νόμου ὃν Θεὸς ἂν νομοθετήσαι, ἑτέρου δὲ τοῦς ταῖς πόλεσι γραπτοῦ, καλὸν ὅπου μὲν μὴ ἐναντιοῦται ὁ γραπτὸς νόμος τοῦ τοῦ Θεοῦ.— Ἔστιν δὲ εὔλογον ὅτι τῶν ἄλλων, τῶν τῆς φύσεως προπιμᾶν λόγον ὄντα νόμον Θεοῦ, παρὰ τὸν γεγραμμένον, καὶ ὑπὸ ἀνθρώπων ἐναντίως τοῦ νόμου τοῦ Θεοῦ νενομοθετημένον: πῶς οὐχὶ τοῦτο μᾶλλον ἐν τοῖς περὶ Θεοῦ νόμοις ποιητέον. *Orig. contr. Cels. lib. 6.*

the Passage be long, I hope it will not be tedious to any one to peruse it. (p) *The Law of God* (says he) *is necessarily to be observed, which will guide us in the way to Happiness; that Holy and Heavenly Law, I mean, which* Marcus Tullius *has divinely described, in his third Book* de Republicâ; *and whose words I will therefore subjoin. Right Reason is a Law of Truth, consonant to Nature, implanted in all Men, Uniform, and Eternal,* &c. *This Law neither needs to be proposed, nor can it be ever, either wholly,*

(p) Suscipienda igitur Dei lex est, quæ nos ad hoc iter dirigat; illa sancta, illa cœlestis, quam Marcus Tullius, in libro de Republicâ tertio, penè divinâ voce depinxit; cujus ego, ne plura dicerem, verba subjeci. Est qnidem vera Lex Recta Ratio, Naturæ congruens, diffusa in omnes, constans, sempiterna. Huic legi nec promulgari fas est, neq; derogari ex hac aliquid licet, neq; tota abrogari potest. Nec vero aut per Senatum, aut per Populum, solvi hac lege possumus, Neq; est quærendus explanator, aut interpres ejus alius. Nec erit alia Lex Romæ, alia Athenis, alia nunc, alia posthac. Sed & omnes gentes, & omni tempore, una Lex, & sempiterna, & immutabilis continebit. Unusq; erit communis quasi Magister & Imperator omnium Deus. Ille legis hujus Juventor, Disceptator, Lator; cui qui non parebit ipse se fugiet, ac naturam hominis aspernabitur; hoc ipso luet maximas pœnas, etiamsi cætera, supplicia quæ putantur, effugerit. *Lact. lib. 6. cap. 8.*

wholly, or in any part, repealed. Neither Senate nor People can discharge us from the Obligation of it. We need not look abroad for an Expositor, to make us understand it. It is not one Law at Rome, *another at* Athens; *one at this Time, another hereafter; but one and the same Eternal and Immutable Law continues, and extends it self to all Times and Nations: And One God is the one common Lord and Governor of all things. He it is that has framed, propounded, and established this Law: and whosoever obeys not him, abandons even himself, renounces his own Nature; and in so doing, suffers actually in himself the greatest punishment, though he escapes all things else that are deemed so.* This we see is *Lactantius*'s own Sense, though in *Cicero*'s Words. It is true nevertheless, that though these Fathers exalted so very much the *unwritten Law*, they did not neglect however to consult, and recommend unto others also the use of the *written One*. And God forbid that we, any more than they, should have the least thought of undervaluing so considerable an Advantage. But that which is most observable in their Conduct is, that in all their Exhortations, these charitable and pious Fathers still left their Auditors at liberty to examine what

what they said unto them, and to judg of it by their own inward Light; without pretending in the least to impose upon other Mens belief, by the bare Authority of their Words. This is granted by St. *Basil*, where he tells us, That (q) *it is the Duty of Auditors, not to believe implicitly, but to examine the Words of those that instruct them.* And thus *Lactantius*, in another place, teaches us, That (r) *in those things especially which concern our Life Eternal, it becomes every Man to search and examine the Truth of them, by his own Sense and Judgment; rather than to expose himself, by a foolish credulity, unto the hazard of being seduced into other Mens Errors.* This shews that they acknowledged Man's Nature to be generally endowed with a Capacity sufficient to judg of Matters of Religion; at least so far as the knowledg thereof is of any Necessity. And to shew us, yet farther,

---

(q) Ὅτι δεῖ τὴν ἀκροατὴν τοὺς παιδευομένους τὰς γραφὰς δοκιμάζειν τὰ παρὰ τῶν διδασκάλων λεγόμενα. *Basil. in Mor. Reg.* 72.

(r) Quare oportet in eâ re maximè, in qua vitæ ratio versatur, sibi quemq; confidere, suoq; judicio, ac propriis sensibus niti, ad investigandam & perpendendam veritatem, quàm credentem alienis erroribus decipi. *Lact. lib.* 2. *c.* 8.

farther, their Opinion of the Purity of this Universal Law of Nature, We have St. *Austin* telling us, That (*s*) *all manner of Sins are directly contrary to Reason, and the Law of Nature.* But it is not necessary to insist thus particularly upon the Opinions of Christian Authors: because they, as well as the Jews, are comprehended in, and concluded by, the genuine Sense of the Holy Scriptures.

I will therefore now endeavour to demonstrate that the Holy Scriptures do likewise abundantly confirm this Doctrine, of the usefulness of Reason in Matters of Religion. In them we may observe, in the first place, frequent Exhortations to move us to consider, to search, to examine every thing; and above all to apply our selves diligently to the Study of Wisdom: Which things are all of them the peculiar Functions of our Rational Faculties, and cannot be done without them. The Expressions of this kind are very pathetical and strong. (*w*) *O that they were wise, that they understood, that they would consider. Brethren,*

(*s*) Omnia peccata sunt in universum contra rationem, & naturæ legem. *August.*

(*w*) *Deut.* 32. 39.

(*x*) *Brethren, be not Children in understanding; howbeit, in Malice be ye Children; but in Understanding be ye Men.* (*y*) *Prove all things, hold fast that which is good.* (*z*) *Beloved, believe not every Spirit, but try the Spirits whether they are of God.* We may observe further, in those sacred Volumes, that the neglect of cultivating that measure of Understanding with which God has endowed us is severely censured. (*a*) *Be not*, says David, *as the Horse, or as the Mule, which have no Understanding.* (*b*) *It is a People of no Understanding*, says the Prophet Isaiah, *and therefore he that made them will not have Mercy on them, and he that formed them will shew them no favour.* And thus that *Stupidity*, which is the natural Consequence of such Neglect, is reckoned up by (*c*) St. *Paul*, without any distinction, amongst the most enormous Vices that corrupt Mankind had degenerated into. Which is sufficient to let us see, that Inadvertency, and want of application of Mind, with their Consequences, Ignorance and Stupidity, especially

(*x*) 1 *Cor.*14.20. (*y*) 1 *Thess.*5.21. (*z*) 1 *Joh.* 4 1. (*a*) *Psal.*32.9. (*b*) *Isa.*27.11. (*c*) *Rom.* 1.13.

cially when they are volutary, are in the Sense of the Holy Pen-men, not things simply indifferent, but extreamly blameable. Again; It is worthy of our Observation, that in the Language of those Writers, *Sin* is ordinarily called *Folly*; which is to say, A transgression of the Law of Reason. Thus *David*, confessing his Sin, says, That (*d*) *he had done very foolishly*. And in another place; (*e*) *The foolish shall not stand in thy sight; thou hatest all workers of Iniquity*. And in like manner, *Solomon*; (*f*) *Fools make a mock at Sin*. And yet more fully the Prophet *Jeremiah*; (*g*) *My People is foolish, they have not known me, they are sottish Children, and they have no understanding; they are wise to do Evil, but to do Good they have no knowledg*. So that *Folly* and *Wickedness*, in the stile of the Scripture, are for the most part used as (*h*) *Synonimous Expressions*. And in like manner *Vertue*, or Obedience to the Law of God, is termed *Wisdom*. Thus *Moses*; (*i*) *Keep therefore the Statutes and Judgments which I have taught you: for this is your Wisdom, and*

(*d*) 2 *Sam*.24.10. (*e*) *Psal*.5.5. (*f*) *Prov*.14.9. (*g*) *Jer*.4.22. (*h*) *Psal*.53.1. (*i*) *Deut*.4.6.

your Understanding, in the sight of the Nations; who shall hear all these Statutes, and say, Surely this great Nation is a Wise and Understanding People. And more expressly *Job*; (k) *The Fear of the Lord, that is Wisdom; and to depart from Evil, that is Understanding.* But further still: What can more expressly authorize the Right of every particular Man to judg for himself, in Matters of Religion, than the Concession of St. *Paul* to the People of *Corinth?* Where, writing to them upon the Communion of the Body and Blood of Christ, which we esteem so deep a Mystery, he does not arrogate any Authority to himself, whereby to inforce what he laid down; but plainly refers the reasonableness of his Doctrine to their own Judgments; bidding (l) *them, as wise Men, judg themselves of what he said.* And if this be not yet sufficient to convince us, that the Spirit which moved those Writters, did intend that we should make use of our Reason in Matters of Religion; We may, in the last place, reflect upon those many Appeals that God himself there makes unto our Reason, for the justification of his own

(k) *Job* 28. 28. (l) 1 *Cor.* 10. 15.

own Conduct. He does it directly in the Prophet *Isaiah*, representing his Conduct towards his People, under the Parable of the Vineyard. (*m*) *And now*, says he, *O Inhabitants of* Jerusalem, *and Men of* Judah, *judg, I pray you, betwixt me, and my Vineyard.* And yet more fully, in the Prophet *Ezekiel*; After a long vindication of his Carriage towards his People, he appeals unto themselves, bidding them, (*n*) *Hear now, O House of* Israel, *Is not my Way equal? are not your Ways unequal?* And in like manner, in the Prophet *Micah*, he says, (*o*) *He will plead with them, asks what he has done unto them, and bids them testify against him.* But to finish this Scripture-Evidence, with a yet directer proof that the Law of God is written in the Heart of Man, we have it expresly said, That (*p*) *the Commandment of God is not hidden from us, neither is it far off; but it is nigh unto us, even in our Mouth, and in our Heart, that we may do it.* And the Apostle tells us, That (*q*) *when the Gentiles which have not the Law, do by Nature the things contained in the Law, these having not the Law, are*

(*m*) *Isa.* 5. 3. (*n*) *Ezek.* 18. 25. (*o*) *Mic.* 6. 2, 3. (*p*) *Deut.* 30. 11, &c. *Rom.* 10. 8. *Act.* 17. 27, 28. (*q*) *Rom.* 2. 14, 15.

a Law unto themselves, and shew the Work of the Law written in their Hearts.

Now methinks, if we take the pains to reflect never so little upon all these Authorities that I have here alledged, we shall evidently perceive, that the Authors of greatest Reputation, and even Veneration, amongst the *Heathens*, *Jews*, and *Christians*, do unanimously agree that *Right Reason* is the first Fundamental Law, unto which all Mankind is naturally and indispensably bound to yield Obedience; that it is plain and stable; that it is pure and just; that it is divine; that it tends directly to the perfecting of our Natures here; and that it will conduct those that sincerely follow it, to a blessed Immortality hereafter. We shall perceive also, that the Holy Scripture exhorts us to make use of our own Reason, in considering, trying, and examining all things: It commends those that do so, and condemns those that do not; It accounts that stupid Ignorance which proceeds from a voluntary Negligence, and want of application of Mind, amongst the most enormous Corruptions of Humane Nature: It makes no difference between Wisdom and Vertue, between Folly and Wickedness: It introduces God himself acknowledging the Rectitude of our

Reason, and submitting unto it the judgment of his own Conduct: And in the last place, it declares expresly, that this Reason, this Law of God written in our Hearts, is sufficient to direct us in our Duty. Or if we seek for any Declaration, yet more express than these, it teaches us. That (*r*) *the Word* (or the Divine Wisdom) *which was in the beginning with God, which created all things, and* (in a word) *which is God himself*; I say, it teaches us, That *this Divine Wisdom is the True Light which enlightneth every Man that cometh into the World.* And now, after all this, shall we dare to palliate our Transgressions, of what nature soever they be, by pretending that we are naturally born in Darkness, and destitute of any such measure of Light as might be capable to direct us in the Way that we ought to walk? No, let us bless God for that excellent Light with which he has illuminated our Minds, and let us faithfully and carefully follow the Guidance of its Beams. For by that means all remaining Clouds will be easily dissipated; And as *Clement* of *Alexandria* has well observed,

(*r*) *John* 1. 7.

(s) *In obeying stedfastly the Will of God, we shall best advance in the knowledg of it.*

This Discourse grows longer than I intended it. But as there remains yet some Considerations behind, which I judg may still more contribute to help Men in overcoming those Prepossessions that hinder them from embracing the Truth; I cannot forbear to pursue the Argument a little further. Seeing it is to Christians that I am writing, it cannot but be worth the while to consider thorowly wherein the substance of the Christian Religion consists. And if I can demonstrate, as I hope I shall, that Christianity it self is nothing else but a Law of Right Reason; methinks that Consideration should infallibly prevail with Christians to acknowledg the Soveraignty of this Law, and submit unto it. Let us try what we can do.

The Learned *Origen* tells us, That (t) *it is the Conformity of our Faith with the*

(s) Ποιοῦντες τὸ θέλημα τοῦ Θεοῦ τὸ θέλημα γινώσκομεν.—*Clem. Alex. Strom, lib.* 1.

(t) Ὅρα δὴ εἰ μὴ τὰ τῆς πίστεως ἡμῶν, ταῖς κοιναῖς ἐννοίαις ἀρχῆθεν συναγορεύοντα, μεταπίθησι τοὺς εὐνομόνως ἀκούοντας τῶν λεγομένων. *Orig. cont. Cels. lib.* 3.

the Common, Innate, Notions of all Mankind, that has given it entrance into the Minds of candid and ingenuous Hearers. And, in another place, (*u*) *Though some Men,* says he, *forsaking the Rule of Laws, renounce even that of Nature; and like Robbers, live in a course of Rapine and Injustice; Yet, to speak properly, the Law of Nature is the chief of all Laws. And therefore we Christians, knowing the Law of Nature to be the chief of all Laws, because it is the Law of God himself, do endeavour to live according to it.* Eusebius represents the Dispensation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, as (*w*) *A Restauration of that same Primitive Religion which was observed by the Holy Men of Old, before the Law of Moses.* St. Austin says, That (*x*) *the Religion which we now call Chri-*

(*u*) Ἐι ὃ κυείως ἀκύεις τȣ̃ νόμȣ, ὁ φύσει βασιλευὺς τ̃ παντῶν ὄντ⊖ ἔστιν: εἰ κ̀ τίνες, δίκλω λήςων ἀποσάντων τ̃ νόμων, τȣ̃τον μ̃ ἀρνȣ̃νται, λησεικῶς ὃ κ̀ ἀδικηπικῶς διαζῶσιν. Ἡμεῖς ȣ̃ν ὅι Χεισιανοὶ τ̃ τ̃ φύσει πάντων βασιλέα ἐπιγνόντες νόμον, τ̃ αὐτὸν ὄντα τῷ νόμῳ τȣ̃ Θεȣ̃, κατ' αὐτὸν ζῆν πειρώμεθα. *Orig. con. Cels. lib.* 5.

(*w*) Ἀνέφανεν εἰς πάνλας ἀνθρώπȣς κ̀ ἐξέλαμψεν ἡ ἀρχέτυπ⊖ τ̃ περὶ Μωσέως διαφέλων ἀνδρῶν ἐυσεβεία. *Euseb. Dem. Evang. lib.* 1. *cap.* 6.

(*x*) Res ipsa quæ nunc Christiana Religio nuncupatur, erat & apud Antiquos, nec defuit ab initio

Christian, is the same with that of the Ancients, and has been always in the World, since the beginning of Mankind: But that this True Religion, which has always been, came not to bear the Name of Christian till after the coming of Jesus Christ in the Flesh: And therefore, says he, *when I spoke of the Christian Religion, as the Religion of our Times, I did not intend thereby to signify that it had not been in former Ages, but only that in these latter Ages it received that Name.* And by this it is, that the Apostle *Paul* endeavoured to conciliate unto him the Athenian Philosophers; I mean, by telling them, not that he came to preach any New Religion, but that (y) *he declared unto them the same God whom they already,* though too *ignorantly worshipped.* And for this Reason, undoubtedly, it is, that in another place, he expresly calls the Duties of Christianity (z) *Our Reasonable Service.*

But this is yet too general. Let us our

---

tio generis humani, quousq; ipse Christus veniret in carne; unde vera Religio, quæ jam erat, cœpit appellari Christiana.———Propterea dixi, hæc est nostris temporibus Christiana Religio, non quia prioribus temporibus non fuit, sed quia posteriori-bus hoc nomen accepit. *August. Retract. lib.* 1.

(y) *Acts* 17. 23. (z) *Rom.* 12. 1.

our selves examine, whether or no we can indeed find so real a conformity between our Religion, and that of Nature. I think we may do it easily. For, in taking a general view of the New Testament, there is nothing in it so obvious, as that the great Design of the coming of Jesus Christ into the World, and of the whole Evangelical Dispensation, was the very same with the Design of the unwritten Law of Nature; I mean, to draw Men off from Vice and Wickedness, and to engage them in the practice of true Piety and Vertue. (*a*) *God sent his Son Christ Jesus into the World, to bless us.* How? *In turning away every one of us from our Iniquities.* But how obvious soever this Truth is, and how little need soever one would think there should be to inculcate or illustrate it to any that call themselves Christians; yet, as *Synesius* observes of the Egyptians of Old, That (*b*) *they despised Things plain and easy to be understood, and could not relish any Religion but what was made up of absurd Monstrosities*; So we find too commonly

(*a*) *Acts* 3. 26.

(*b*) Τὸ ῥᾷστον καταγελάστεται. Δεῖται γὰρ τερατείας. *Syneſ. in Encom. Calvitii.*

monly still, that Men are so given to Speculations, Allegories, and Mysteries, that they are apt to neglect and despise things most intelligible, solid and useful. And therefore I cannot think it a superfluous Work to insist a while upon this Consideration; that, if possible, its Impression upon Mens Minds may be more sensible. But this Work has indeed already been so excellently performed in our Language, by the Reverend and Worthy Doctor *Fowler*, that whatsoever I can say may seem impertinent to those that have read his Book, Intituled, *The Design of Christianity*. I will therefore endeavour to touch it as succinctly as possibly I can.

In the first place, then, I observe that there are many Passages which, in general, confirm this Proposition; (c) *That the Great Design of the Gospel of Jesus Christ tends singly to draw Men off from Vice and Wickedness, and to ingage them in the exact practice of Piety and Vertue*; Or, in St. Paul's own words, That (x) *Christ gave himself for us*, to the end *that he might redeem us from all Iniquity, and purify*

(c) *Mat.*1.21. *Ephes.*5.25, &c. *Col.*1.22. 1 *Pet.* 2.24. 1 *John* 3.5,6. *Gal.*1.4. (d) *Tit.*2.24.

rify unto himself a peculiar People zealous of good Works.

And, if we examine the thing yet more particularly, we shall find nothing that does not, one way or another, illustrate this Truth. What is the End of the great and precious Promises of the Gospel? St. *Peter* tells us, That (e) *they are given us, that thereby we might be made partakers of the Divine Nature, having escaped the Corruption that is in the World through Lust.* And it is, accordingly, the Use that St. *Paul* makes of them. (f) *Having therefore these Promises, dearly beloved Brethren,* (says he) *let us cleanse our selves from all filthiness of the Flesh and Spirit, perfecting Holiness in the fear of God.* To whom is it that those Promises are made? The same Apostle tells us, That it is (g) *to those who, by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for Glory, and Honour, and Immortality, that God will give Eternal Life.* And in another place, That (h) *Godliness has the Promise of the Life that now is, and of that which is to come.* On the other side; Against whom, and for what Cause is it that the

(e) 2 *Pet.* 1. 4. (f) 2 *Cor.* 7. 1. (g) *Rom.* 2. 7. (h) 1 *Tim.* 4. 8.

the Threatnings of the Gospel are denounced? St. *Paul* again answers us, That (*i*) *the Wrath of God is revealed from Heaven, against all Ungodliness and Unrighteousness of Men*; And more particularly in another place; (*k*) *Know you not*, says he, *that the Unrighteous shall not inherit the Kingdom of God? Be not deceived. Neither Fornicators, nor Idolators, nor Adulterers, nor Effeminate Persons, nor Abusers of themselves with Mankind, nor Thieves, nor Covetous, nor Drunkards, nor Revilers, nor Extortioners, shall enter the Kingdom of God.*

But let us not yet stop here. If we look upon the Precepts of the Gospel, which are properly the very Terms of that Law, we shall find that they all tend to the same End. *That* (*l*) *Divine Sermon of our Saviour, upon the Mountain*, contains an admirable Collection of them. And in another place, He reduces the substance of all to this short Abridgment; (*m*) *That we should love the Lord our God with all our Heart, and with all our Soul, and with all our Mind; and love our Neighbour as our selves.* All the Epistles

(*i*) *Rom.*1.18. (*k*) 1 *Cor.*6.9,10. (*l*) *Mat.* 5,6,7. (*m*) *Mat.*22.37,39.

ſtles of the Apoſtles are full of Exhortations of this kind, and of Enumerations of thoſe Vertues unto which the Profeſſion of this Holy Religion ingages us. Many of thoſe Paſſages are ſo excellent, and ſo ſtrong, that I cannot forbear tranſcribing ſome of them. And firſt thoſe that are moſt general. As thus: (n) *Let every one that nameth the Name of Chriſt, depart from Iniquity.* (o) *Every Man that hath this Hope in him, purifieth himſelf, even as he is pure.* (p) *As he who hath called you is Holy, ſo be ye Holy in all manner of Converſation.* (q) *Follow Peace with all Men, and Holineſs, without which no Man ſhall ſee the Lord.* But we may do well to conſider, yet more exactly, in what this Holineſs conſiſts; and what are the peculiar Qualifications required in a Chriſtian? In anſwer whereunto, we are told, That (r) *the Wiſdom that is from above, is firſt pure, then peaceable, gentle, and eaſy to be entreated, full of Mercy and good Fruits, without partiality, and without hypocriſy.* And that (s) *the Grace of God which bringeth Salvation, hath appeared to all Men,*

(n) 2 *Tim.*2.19. (o) 1 *Joh.*3.3. (p) 1 *Pet.*1.15. (q) *Heb.*12.14. (r) *Jam.*3.17. (s) *Tit.*2.11,12.

Men, teaching us, that denying Ungodliness, and worldly Lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godlily, in this present World: Which last Expression comprehends our whole Duty, towards God, towards our Neighbours, and towards our Selves. St. *Peter*, more particularly, describes, as it were, a Chain of Christian Duties; bidding us (*t*) *add to our Faith, Vertue; to Vertue, Knowledg; to Knowledg, Temperance; to Temperance, Patience; to Patience, Godliness; to Godliness, brotherly Kindness; and to brotherly Kindness, Charity.* And, in like manner, St. *Paul*; (*u*) *Finally, Brethren, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any Vertue, if there be any Praise, think on these things.* I should trespass too far upon the Reader's Patience, if I continued to transcribe all that the New Testament furnishes me upon this Subject. I will therefore conclude with that Passage of St. *Paul*, where after having exhorted the *Galatians* (*w*) *to follow the guidance of the Spirit, and not to fulfil the Lusts of the Flesh;*

(*t*) 2 Pet. 1. 5, 6, 7. (*u*) Phil. 4. 8. (*w*) Gal. 5. 16, &c.

Flesh; he tells them, without any ambiguity, what are the Works both of the one and of the other; that is to say, he there teaches us, not only summarily, but very exactly and particularly, what are the things that the Christian Religion commands and forbids. *The Works of the Flesh* (says he) *are manifest, which are these; Adultery, Fornication, Uncleanness, Lasciviousness, Idolatry, Witchcraft, Hatred, Variance, Emulations, Wrath, Strife, Seditions, Heresies, Envyings, Murders, Drunkenness, Revellings, and suchlike; of which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they who do such things, shall not inherit the Kingdom of God. But the Fruit of the Spirit is Love, Joy, Peace, Long-suffering, Gentleness, Goodness, Faith, Meekness, Temperance, against the practisers of which there is no Law.*

Surely now it will be no difficult matter for any one to frame unto himself a true Idea of the Christian Religion. On the contrary, it seems to me most difficult, nay impossible, to refrain from determining upon these, and many other Passages of Scripture, That (*x*) *the Substance*

(*x*) 1 *Cor.*13.1,2. *Mark* 7.2, &c. 1 *Sam.*15.22. *Gal.*6.15. *Rom.*2.28,29. *Joh.*4.23,24. *Eccles.*12. 13. *Isa.*1.11, &c. 16, &c. *Tit.*3.8,9.

stance of our Religion lies neither in empty Speculations, nor outward Ceremonies; but wholly and solely in a pure and spiritual adoration of the Author of our Being, and in a vertuous Life. But I avoid, as much as I can, to deliver any thing in my own Expressions, lest what I say should seem to proceed only from my own sense. The whole Design of this Discourse, is to confirm the Truth proposed, by the most Venerable Authorities. And therefore I chose rather to represent the Idea of our Religion, in the Expressions of one of its Ancient and Eminent Defenders. (y) *The Sacrifices*, says Minutius Felix, *that God requires of us, are an upright Heart, a pure Mind, and a clear Conscience. He that lives in Innocence, worships him: He that observes the Rules of Justice, sacrifices to him: He that is simple-hearted, and without guilt, obtains his Favour: And he that preserves another from danger, makes him the most acceptable Offering.*

(y) Litabilis Hostia bonus Animus, & pura Mens, & sincera Conscientia. Igitur qui Innocentiam colit Domino supplicat, qui Justitiam Deo libat, qui fraudibus abstinet propitiat Deum, qui hominem periculo surripit optimam victimam cœdit. Hæc nostra sacrificia, hæc Dei sacra sunt. Sic apud nos religiosior est ille qui justior. *Min. Felix. Octav.*

Offering. These are our Sacrifices, these are our Mysteries, and he is the most religious in our esteem, who is the most Just. Many Passages to this purpose may be read in *Dr. Cave's Primitive Christianity*, which I forbear to transcribe, because they are already collected and published in our own Language. He proves there, by a Cloud of Witnesses, *Athenagoras, Clemens, Justin, Eusebius, Tertullian, Arnobius*, and others; That *the Primitive Christians placed not their Religion in talking finely, but in living well; that no Man with them was accounted a Christian, but he that was truly pious and religious; and that if any lived otherwise than Christ had commanded, however smoothly they might profess the Christian Doctrine, yet they were not owned to be Christians.* But of all those Ancient Fathers, *Lactantius* has express this Truth most fully; telling us, That (z) *the only thing that God requires from us is Innocence; and that whosoever presents himself before God in such a state, hath all the Piety, and all the Religion, necessary to render himself acceptable in his sight.*

(z) Nihil enim sancta & singularis illa Majestas aliud ab homine desiderat quam solam innocentiam; quam siquis obtulerit Deo, satis piè satis religiosè litavit. *Lact. lib. 6. c. p. 1.*

Will any one now tell me that there is any thing, in this Representation that I have been making of our Holy Religion, which is not exactly Vertuous and Reasonable? Will they say that there is any thing in it repugnant to the pure Light of Nature? I do not think that any Man can be so extravagant, as to maintain such a gross Absurdity. For, in effect, instead of raising a higher esteem of our Religion, that Assertion would redound extreamly to its dishonour; and would manifestly imply an imputation of the highest Injustice to God Almighty, that having created us Reasonable Creatures, he should oblige us to any sort of Duties that are contrary to the Principles of our Nature. In a Word: If we admit not that there is a due capacity in the Soul of Man to judg soundly concerning Matters of Religion, we do thereby intirely root out the Ground of all Religion from amongst Men. We make our selves meer Machines, and uncapable either of Vertue or Vice, of Good or Evil. And if, on the other side, we do admit the adequateness of our Capacity, and the rectitude of our Judgments, in these Matters; and if at the same time we pretend to maintain the Truth of the Christian Religion;

we must of necessity allow that there is an exact conformity between the Principles of the one and of the other. For there can be no disagreement in Truth: And if Christianity were found contradictory to any thing, that the Light of Nature makes manifest to Mankind, we should be forced, so far, to acknowledg it faulty and false.

But if it be further objected to me, that though Christianity cannot be absolutely contrary to the Light of Nature, yet that perhaps it may be, and indeed it is, above it; I will make no difficulty to subscribe to that Assertion. The Gospel of Jesus Christ is a History of positive Facts; which we could not have known to have been necessary in the Counsel of God, if Christ had not declared them to have been so; nor could we have known the Execution of that Counsel, any more than of any other History, if it were not recorded and conveyed down to us by good Authorities. But this does in no ways hinder that, when we have the Truth of that Dispensation represented to us, we may contemplate it with the Eyes of our Mind, and make use of our Natural Reason in drawing the Consequences that flow from it. This, I will be bold to

say, we may so much the rather do, in that all the Consequences that can be drawn from any Evangelical Truth, tend singly to the same End as its direct Precepts; that is to say, to assist us in redressing the Disorders of our Flesh, and in guiding the whole course of our Lives according to the true Principles of that Eternal Law, which God himself has ingraven in our Hearts. This I find asserted by the Divines of *Port Royal*, who are now deservedly esteemed the most moderate, and most rational, amongst the Roman Catholicks; and they themselves build their Assertion upon the Authority of St. *Austin*; telling us, That (a) *All the multiplicity of the Precepts, and of the Mysteries, that are exprest in so many different manners, in the Holy Volumes, do all center in this one Commandment, of loving God with all our Heart, and loving our Neighbours as our selves. For the Scripture* (it is St. *Austin* that says it) *forbids but one only thing, which is Concupiscence, and the love of the Creatures; and it commands but one only thing, which is Charity, and the Love of God. Upon this double Precept is founded the whole System of*

(a) Preface an Nouv. Testam. de Mons.

of the Christian Religion. And it is unto this, say they, *according to the Expression of Jesus Christ, that all the Ancient Law and the Prophets have reference; and we may add also, all the Mysteries, and all the Precepts of the New Law; for (b) Love, says St. Paul, is the fulfilling of the Law.*

But notwithstanding all this general Evidence, perhaps some Persons will still fancy greater Difficulties than indeed there are, in applying it to particular Cases; and they will think it no weak Objection to alledge, that the *Sacraments* of the Gospel are of Arbitrary Institution, and have no Foundation in the Light of Nature; and that *Faith*, at least, is incontestably above Reason. It seems unto me, nevertheless, that whatsoever be the Foundation of these Mysteries, the thing that imports us most to consider is their use. And in doing so, we shall still find the Truth of what I am endeavouring to establish: For it will be found in every particular Instance, as it has been demonstrated in general, that the ultimate Design of the whole Gospel-Dispensation is to contribute, first, directly, (*c*) *to our Sanctification*;

(*b*) *Rom.* 13. 10. (*c*) 2 *Thess.* 2. 13.

cation; *and, by that means, to our Salvation.* If we consider, in the first place, the use of the Sacraments; It is evident that the End of their Institution is, only to engage us more closely, and to provoke us more powerfully to the practice of our Duty. This we are taught most particularly by St. *Peter*, concerning Baptism, that its saving Vertue does not consist (*d*) *in the putting away of the filth of the Flesh, but in the answer of a good Conscience towards God.* And as for the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, seeing all Men agree that it was instituted (*e*) *in commemoration of his Death*, I cannot imagine what greater Effects can be ascribed to it, or expected from it, than such as are ascribed to his Death; which are, (*f*) *the purging of our Consciences from dead Works, that we may serve the living God.* And now concerning *Faith* it self, however speculative the Notion of it be, and how critically soever some Men abstract, and distinguish it from things practical; yet none can deny but that the *Faith*, by which the Scriptures sometimes say that we are (*g*) *justified*, and some-

(*d*) 1 *Pet.*3.21. (*e*) 1 *Cor.*11.24,25. (*f*) *Heb.* 9. 14. (*g*) *Rom* 3.28.

ſometimes that we are (*h*) *ſaved*, is *a Faith that worketh by* (*i*) *Love*; *A Faith that* (*k*) *purifieth our Hearts*; *A Faith that maketh* (*l*) *perfect*; And that without theſe Operations, *Faith*, of it ſelf (*m*) *alone, is not reckoned for any thing*, but (*n*) *by Works only becomes diſcernable and compleat*. Why then ſhould we perplex our Minds with any doubtful Explications of difficult Paſſages? We know that the Subſtance of our Religion conſiſts in (*o*) *Charity*; and that it is (*p*) *not a bare profeſſion of Chriſtianity that demonſtrates a ſaving Faith*; but that, as the *Tree* is to be known by its (*q*) *Fruit*, ſo is *Faith* by *Works*, and no other way. Thoſe renowned Divines that I laſt cited give us, in the ſame Place, a remarkable paſſage of St. *Auſtin*'s upon the Subject of Knowledg. *He that knows how to love God, and to regulate his Life by that Love*, (ſays St. *Auſtin*) *knows all that the Scripture propounds to be known*. And upon the like reaſon, ſurely, I may add, that the ſame Perſon (*he that ſo loves, and ſo lives*) believes all that

(*h*) *Epheſ.* 2. 8. (*i*) *Gal.* 5. 6. (*k*) *Acts* 15. 9. (*l*) *Jam.* 1. 3, 4. (*m*) *Jam.* 2. 14, 17. (*n*) *Jam.* 2. 18, 22. (*o*) 1 *Cor.* 13. 1, &c. (*p*) *Mat.* 7. 22, &c. (*q*) *Mat.* 7. 16, &c. *Jam.* 2. 18.

the Scripture requires to be believed.

Thus, I think, it now appears evidently enough, that the Laws and Rules of true Christianity are, in substance, the very same with the Laws of Nature. But we must not from thence conclude, that those are of no further use to us than these. All we can say is, that the Corruption into which Mankind was fall'n made them stand in need of some further Admonition, to remind them of their Duty. And so St. Austin also plainly expresses himself, saying, That (r) *the Reason why God has given us a written Law, is not because his Law was not already written in our Hearts; but because Men, letting out their Appetites after things abroad, were become Strangers to themselves. And therefore,* says he, *we have been summon'd and call'd upon by him that is every where present, to return into our selves. For what is it that the outward written Law calls*

(r) Quia homines appetentes ea quæ foris sunt, etiam à seipsis exules facti sunt, data est etiam conscripta lex; non quia in cordibus non erat; sed quia tu fugitivus eras cordis tuæ, ab illo qui ubiq; est comprehenderis, & ad teipsum intùs revocaris. Propterea, scripta lex quid clamat eis qui deseruerunt legem scriptam in cordibus suis? (Isa. 46. 8.) Redite prevaricatores ad Cor. *August. in Psal.* 57.

calls out for, unto those that had forsaken the Law written in their Hearts, (Isa. 46. 8.) but, Return, O ye Transgressors, into your own Hearts? And thus it cannot be denied, but that the preaching of the Gospel was an Admonition of this sort, accompanied with many Circumstances more favourable and advantagious to Mankind than the bare Light of Nature. For, without examining all the particular (s) *Blessings* that are derived to us by the (t) *Redemption that is in Jesus Christ*; We have, in the first place, a visible advantage, by (u) *the perfection of that Model* which is proposed to us in his Life; and which ought to encourage us, according to the Expression of St. *Paul*, (w) *in forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, to press towards the Mark, for the Prize of the high Calling of God in Christ Jesus.* We have another considerable Advantage in the (x) *Clearness and Evidence of his Precepts*; which without troubling us with long and intricate Disquisitions, do teach us our Duty with a Perspicuity suited to the meanest Capacities;

(s) *Gal.*3.13,14. (t) *Rom.*3.24. *Ephes.* 1. 7. (u) 1 *Pet.*1.15. (w) *Phil.*3. 13,14. (x) *Mat.* 7. 28, 29.

cities; and were delivered with an unquestionable (y) *Demonstration of the Spirit and Power of God.* Again; we have a further Advantage in the Proof he has given us of our future Being; and in the Natural Efficacy of those Hopes and Fears which arise from thence, and inforce his Doctrine. For it is (z) *by his Gospel that Life and Immortality are* yet more fully *made manifest unto us*, than by the Light of Nature. And it is from thence that are drawn the strongest Arguments, and the powerfullest Motives, to ingage us in the practice of our Duty. There are yet (a) *many other strong Considerations* propounded to us in divers Places, to inforce the Doctrine of the Gospel; which it is not needful for me particularly to insist upon. Only the use of all is, that, according to the advice of St. *Chrysostom*, we ought now to endeavour so much the more earnestly to walk answerably to the Advantage we enjoy, and (b) *to shew forth greater Vertues in our Lives than did the Ancients, because*

(y) 1 *Cor.* 2. 4. *Luke* 4. 32. (z) 2 *Tim.* 1. 10.
(a) *Heb.* 2. 2, 3, 4.
(b) Μείζονα ὀφείλομεν δείκνυσθαι δεῖγματα ἀρετῆς, ὅτι πολλὰ ἡ τοῦ πνεύματος χάρις ἐπιδέδωκε νῦν, καὶ μεγάλη τοῦ Χριστοῦ παρουσία καὶ δωρεά. *Chrysost. de Virg.*

because (says he) *the Grace of the Holy Spirit is now more shed abroad, and we have received from God a Present of inestimable advantage in the coming of Jesus Christ.* But after all these Considerations, we must again return to our first Principles, and acknowledg still the excellency of our Natural and Inward Law: Because we find that this same Law, far from being abrogated, has in effect been confirmed, cultivated, and improved by Jesus Christ, and made use of as the very Foundation of all his Instructions.

What is it then that can yet frighten and hinder us from making use of that Light, which God has given to direct us in the Conduct of our Lives, and in the Understanding of his revealed Will? I see nothing but that empty Fantome of the pretended Authority of some Church, which still presents it self to the troubling of weak Minds, though Reason and Common Sense have long since chased it away from their Habitations. But what is then that so venerable a Church, for which I am bound to have so great a deference, as to pull out the Eyes of my own Understanding, that I may receive blindly her Decisions? There are so many Churches who equally pretend to that Priviledg, that if we

were

were inclined to follow the general Maxim of submitting unto some one or other of them, that Resolution would not ease us of any trouble; because there would still remain an unconquerable difficulty about the Choice. And therefore, waving all their several Pretensions to this Priviledg, which are never like to be otherwise decided, than by an absolute frustration of them all; I will not fear to affirm, that all the Marks by which they pretend to characterise the True Church, may be found there where perhaps they least expect them; I mean, that they will be found amongst the Followers of these Principles that I have been insisting upon.

Let us examine a little into the Matter. Is it the *Universality* of a Church that denotes it to be a true One? Any other Principles than these have not the least shadow of it. All other particular Professions are confined within the narrow Limits of some Country; Or, lest these Limits should be too large, they continually are endeavouring to circumscribe themselves by Tests, and certain narrow Decisions of pretended Orthodoxy, by which they uncharitably prejudge all that differ from them in their Niceties, and exclude them from their Commu-

nion.) But on the contrary, this Universal Law of Right Reason is spread over the Face of the whole Earth; and far from excluding any one from the Hope of Salvation upon such frivolous Accounts, the Followers of it embrace all Persons that are truly vertuous with an equal Affection, and do (c) *by no means condemn any Man, or exclude him from the Communion of the Church, for a meer contrariety of Opinion.* This was the Judgment of St. *Cyprian.* And it was undoubtedly no less the Judgment of St. *Peter*, when he declared that (d) *God is no Respecter of Persons; but that in every Nation, he that feareth Him, and worketh Righteousness, is accepted with him.*

Well: Is it the *Purity of Doctrine* that makes the Character of the True Church? Nothing can be imagined more pure than what I have proved all along in this Discourse, by Clouds of Pagan, Christian, and Divine Authorities, to be the genuine Results of that Heavenly Principle, which is implanted in the Minds of all Mankind. It is from thence, ante-

(c) Neminem judicantes, aut à jure communionis, si diversùm senserit, amoventes. *Cypr. in Conc. Carth. de Hæret. bapt.*

(d) *Acts* 10. 34, 35.

antecedently to any Arbitrary Command, that all Duties of Morality whatsoever, even the highest, received their Rise, and became Obligatory. They were so, because they were reasonable; that is, because they were suitable to the Circumstances of Things. And it seems hardly conceivable how any thing that is otherwise; any thing that is apparently absurd, or inconsistent with those Circumstances; which is no more than to say, any thing that is contradictory to the first general and unalterable Law of God, should be made generally obligatory, by the Force of any new Command. All that has been added unto that first universal Law, (as St. *Austin*, and others of the Fathers, already cited, plainly intimate) is only by way of Remembrance, and Reinforcement. The Law it self continued always, and still continues, the same. And by this it is that (e) *Celsus, thinking* (as *Origen* tells us) *to detract from the Reputation of the Morality that was taught by Christians; alledged,*

(e) Ἰδωμὲν γὰρ ἢ ἠθικὸν τόπον ἄεται διαβαλεῖν, τῷ κοινὸν εἶναι, καὶ πρὸς τοὺς ἄλλους φιλοσόφους, ὡς ἐ σεμνὸν τι καὶ καινὸν μάθημα. Πρὸς τοῦτο δὴ λεκτέον, ὅτι τοῖς εἰσαγγεῖλαι κελεύσαν δικαίαν Θεὸν, ἀπο-

ledged, that there was nothing extraordinary in their Doctrines on that Subject; nothing new; nothing that was not common to them with other Philosophers. But *Origen*, in answering that Objection, does not think fit to deny, but rather confirm the Truth of it. *For*, says he, *if we admit the Judgment of God to be just, we must acknowledg that there can be no ground for the punishment of Sinners, unless the common Conceptions of all Men are sufficient to give them a sound understanding in the Duties of Morality. And therefore it is not to be thought strange, that those things which God has taught us by the Prophets, and by our Saviour, were implanted by him in the Minds of all Men; that so every Man, having had the Intention and Meaning of the Law written in his own Heart, should be left without excuse before the Divine Tribunal.* Particular Instances therefore of the Purity of the Precepts of that

---

ἀποκέκλειστο ἂν ἡ ὁδὸς τοῖς ἁμαρτανομένοις δίκη, μὴ πάντων ἐχόντων καὶ τὰς κοινὰς ἐννοίας πρόληψιν ὑγιῆ περὶ τοῦ ἠθικοῦ τόπου. Διόπερ οὐδὲν θαυμαστὸν τὸν αὐτὸν Θεὸν, ἅπερ ἐδίδαξε διὰ τῶν προφητῶν καὶ τοῦ σωτῆρος, ἐγκατεσπαρκέναι τοῖς ἅπαντων ἀνθρώπων ψυχαῖς, ἵν' ἀναπολόγητοι ὦσι τῇ θείᾳ κρίσει πᾶς ἄνθρωπος, ἢ ἔχων τὸ βούλημα τοῦ νόμου γραπτὸν ἐν τῇ ἑαυτοῦ καρδίᾳ. Orig. contr. Cels. lib. I.

that Law, however numerously they might be collected out of the Writings of the Wise and Vertuous Heathens, who had no other Law, yet seem altogether needless to be here inserted: bebecause whatsoever is most pure in Morals, flows all from one and the same Original Fountain; This then in general may suffice. Those that followed the Dictates of that natural Law, did not satisfy themselves with an outward appearance of conformity to it (as the (f) *Jews* are accused by our *Saviour* himself to have done by the Law of *Moses*) but they extended the Force of all Duties to the very inmost thoughts of the Mind; and taught (g) *That the Guilt of a wicked Intention was equal to that of an Action.*

Again. Is it then the *Unity of Faith*, by which a true Church is to be distinguished from a false one? We have nothing but perpetual Disputes amongst all the Pretenders to that Character; and this even about things which they esteem the most essential Parts of Religion. But

(f) *Mat.* 5. 21, 22, 27, 28.

(g) Nam Scelus intra se tacitum qui cogitat ullum, Facti crimen habet.——*Juven. Sat.* 13.

But on the contrary, all those that listen unto the Voice of God in their own Hearts are unanimously agreed about what is essential; and for other things they break not the Bonds of Charity.

What is it then, *Visibility*, *Antiquity*, *Perpetuity*, or what other more evident Mark, by which a True Church is to be known? They are all on our side. For in a word; *The Law of Nature is acknowledged by all Men; it always has been; and it is impossible it should be ever abolished.*

I make haste. But is it possible, that after all these Considerations, there can be any Persons that yet doubt of the adequateness of our Faculties, and of that truly Divine Light with which God has enlightned our Minds, to judg universally of every thing that concerns us? Methinks there should not. But however, if a mistaken respect for the Name of Christian do so over-aw any Mens Minds, that they are afraid to admit the Universality of this Light that I contend for; I desire such Persons as lie yet under that Prejudice, to consider, in the last place, that however it have been anciently with the generality of Mankind, yet at least they themselves, and all others that are now born under the Gospel-Dispensation, have no reason to

doubt of it. This I say only to those that are thus prejudiced; having, I think, said sufficiently already in the General. But however, this Consideration I suppose will be of weight with them. And therefore, I say, I desire these Persons to consider, That it is in this particularly that consists the (*h*) *New Covenant, into which we are received by the Mediation of Jesus Christ*, as we may see by the express terms of it. (*i*) *I will put my Law in their inward parts, saith the Lord, and write it in their Hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my People. And they shall teach no more every Man his Neighbour, and every Man his Brother, saying, Know the Lord; for they shall all know me, from the least to the greatest.* So that to bring now into question the reality and sufficiency of this inward Light and Knowledg, with which God has endowed us, is in a manner to renounce even Christianity it self, which assures us of it.

Let us therefore at last yield unto the Evidence of so many Proofs, and acknowledg that God has not left us destitute of such a measure of Light as is necessary to direct us unto that End for which

(*h*) *Heb.*9.15. (*i*) *Jer.*31.33,34. *Heb.*8.10,11.

which he made us. Perhaps indeed we have not a Capacity sufficient to comprehend all the Subtilties of the Schools; and perhaps also (nay, I doubt I may say it without any perhaps) those Worshipful Doctors themselves, both Ancient and Modern, who invented such nice Subtilties, have too often affected a mysterious Obscurity, without having any clearer comprehension of what they express, than we that read or hear them. But that need not trouble us. If the comprehension of those things pass our Capacity, undoubtedly the knowledg of them is not necessary to our Salvation. For it is impossible that the Righteous Judg of all Men, (k) *who does not reap where he has not sown*, should not have endowed us with such a measure of Knowledg, at least, as is sufficient to produce the Effects he requires from us. It is impossible, I say again, That (l) *God who will have all Men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledg of the Truth*, should have made any thing absolutely necessary to our Salvation, which he has made us absolutely uncapable to understand and comply with. We are not therefore to measure the importance of any Articles of our Creed by the No-

(k) *Mat.* 25.24. (l) 1 *Tim.* 2.4.

tions of the Learned, but by the Capacity of the Vulgar. Whatever passes the Conceptions of the meanest Capacity, however flourishing and ornamental it may seem, can certainly be no essential part of Religion. Let it be our principal care, then, to fix our selves immoveably upon those stable Principles of Eternal Truth, which all Men agree in; and to disingage our selves, as much as possible, from any slavish subjection to those Things (whatever they be) which many dispute about, but few understand. Let us not distinguish our selves by the narrowness, but by the largeness of our Principles. In a word; Let our Religion be truly Catholick. Catholick, I mean, in the extent of our Love and Charity towards others, but exactly strict and scrupulous in the practice of every Duty our selves. For if we thus make use of, and improve the Talents (the Light and Capacity) that God has given us, we may be assured that our Accounts will be received by him with approbation. That is sufficient. I will therefore now put an end to this Discourse; and, that I may do it with some weight, I will close all in the words of one of the most Learned, Grave, and Judicious Authors of

late

late Ages. (*m*) *It is absolutely repugnant* (says Grotius) *to the Goodness of God, to think that those who, without any respect to worldly Advantages, do seek after the Way that leads to Eternal Happiness, in imploring his Divine Assistance, and humbly submitting to his Providence, should not be able to find and know it.* And he concludes therefore; That *since God hath implanted in the Mind of Man a capacity of judging, there is no part of Truth upon which that Capacity ought more to be exercised, than that which we cannot be ignorant of, without the hazard of Eternal Perdition.*

(*m*) Ut via ad æternam salutem cognosci nequeat ab his, qui nullo commodi aut honoris respectu eam quærunt, se suaq; omnia Deo subjicientes, & eum pro auxilio orantes, Bonitas Divina vetat credi. Et sanè cum judicandi vim Deus inseruerit humanæ menti, nulla pars veri dignior est in quam ea impendatur, quàm illa quæ ignorari sine amittendæ salutis æternæ periculo non potest. *Grot. de Ver. Rel. chr. lib. 6.*

The Conclusion.

YET, after all, perhaps it may not be amiss to draw up the Things that have been here recommended, into a short Scheme; and to represent summarily the influence that they have, or ought to have, upon all Men, both in private and publick Capacities.

The Subject is *Humane Reason, with Relation to Matters of Religion.* Or rather, I desire now to propose it more plainly, as a Prospect of Religion presenting its self upon the consideration of Rational Principles.

By *Reason* I understand that steady, uniform Light, that shines in the Minds of all Men; That Divine Touchstone, or Test, by which all Men are inabled (so far, I mean, as they are able) to discern the Congruity and Incongruity of Propositions, and thereupon to pronounce them true or false.

There are indeed *different Degrees* of clearness in the intellectual Perception of different Men; occasioned by the different degrees of Attention in themselves,

and the different Representation of things from without. But the *Light* by which all things are discerned is *universally one and the same.*

The *Uniformity* of this Light is the ground of all intellectual Communication between Man and Man. For if different Men saw always the same Things in different Lights, it would be impossible for one Man (by any Representations whatsoever) to raise the same Conceptions in another Man's Mind that he has in his own.

Whatsoever *Extraordinary Illumination* some Men may enjoy, it can only be of Authority, and useful to themselves: Or, at most, it can only be so far useful, and of Authority to others, as those that enjoy it are able to give *Extraordinary Proof* of it.

All Matters of Religion, therefore, even as all other Affairs of Humane Life, are to be handled by Men, (with reference to one another) in Methods conformable to the *Universal and Uniform Light of all Mankind.*

By *Religion* I understand the Belief of the Existence of a God; and the Sense and Practice of those Duties that result from the knowledg we have of him, of our selves, and of the Relations

we stand in to him, and to our Fellow-Creatures.

The Existence of a God I take to be demonstrable from the necessity of admitting some first Cause of all Things. Whatsoever that be, I call it *God.*

The Idea that we have of this *God*, arises from the Contemplation of those innumerable Perfections that we discern in the things that are. For he that gave those Perfections unto these things, must needs have an inexhaustible Fountain of Perfection in himself.

By *God* then I mean, the *First Principle of all things.* He that made all things what they are, and endowed them with all their different Powers and Virtues. And I therefore conclude him to be *A Being absolutely perfect.*

My own Existence is a Self-evident Principle. No Reflection can give unto a Philosopher any greater assurance of his own Existence, than the intimate persuasion that every Plowman has of his, without any meditation.

The Idea that Men have of themselves is two-fold; *Material*, and *Immaterial.*

The Material Part of Man is his Body; which is evidently subject to the general Laws of Matter, and liable to all the Mutations

tations that are incident to other Material Beings.

The Immaterial Part of Man is his Mind; which discovers it self in his Capacity of thinking and reasoning.

Thought exceeds the Power of *Matter*. That therefore which thinks, the Mind or Soul of Man, is not material; and by consequence not subject to the Laws of Matter, nor liable to the Mutations that are incident to Matter; but capable of a Subsistence, notwithstanding any alteration, or dissolution, that shall happen unto the Parts of his Body.

This *Immateriality*, and *Immortality* of the *Soul*, has been understood, and believed, by the generality of *Heathen Philosophers*; in consequence of their own Reflections and Ratiocinations; long before that new Evidence that has been given of it unto Mankind by the Revelation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

The Belief that the Ancient Philosophers had of the *Soul's Immortality*, is an undeniable Proof that it is a Doctrine *discoverable by the Light of Nature*; because they, who had no other Light, could not otherwise have discovered it.

The *Relation* that Men stand in towards *one another* is, chiefly, observable in the mutual *Necessity* that all Men have

have of one anothers *Assistance* and *Succour*. It is hardly possible for any Man to subsist at all, but absolutely impossible to subsist comfortably, without borrowing some help from others.

These are the *Circumstances* in which Mankind is born into the World. We are placed in these Circumstances by God Almighty, the Universal Cause and Prinple of all things. So that whatsoever we are led unto by the *Necessity of these Circumstances*, is in effect a *Duty* imposed upon us by the *Eternal and Unalterable Law of God.*

The *Relation* then that we stand in towards *God* is, First, as to *A Benefactor*; from whom we have received our Being, together with our present Enjoyments, and our Capacity of any further Enjoyments whatsoever. Next, as to *A Law-giver*, or Governor; by whom we are obliged to the observance of certain Rules, or Ordinances, unto which he has subjected us.

If we consider singly the *Idea* that we have of *our own Being*, the Rule that results from thence for our Conduct is, That we must not degenerate from the Dignity of our Nature; but must therefore *bridle* and govern all the *Appetites* and *Passions* that arise from our *Corporeal*

real Constitution, according to the genuine Dictates of those nobler Faculties of *Ratiocination and Judgment*, wherewith God has endowed our Mind.

If we consider the *Relation* that we stand in towards *one another*, the Law of God obliges us indispensibly to *Truth*, *Equity*, *Charity*, *Benevolence*, and to every thing that tends to the *Settlement of Societies*, and to the general *Welfare of Mankind*. For every particular Man's greatest Interest being involved in the Interest of the whole, the observance of such things as tend to the general Good, is every particular Man's greatest Duty; and is not therefore to be transgrest for the sake of any lesser Interest whatsoever.

If we consider the *Relation* that we stand in towards *God*, it requires (that is, his Law requires) our *Acknowledgment*, *Gratitude*, *Love*, *Dependance*, *Submission*, or (in one word) our humblest *Adoration* of his Infinite Perfections.

The *Observance* of these Rules is a *Duty* incumbent upon Mankind by the Law of God.

The *Breach* of any of these Rules is a Breach of the Law of God, an Offence against the Law-maker, a *Sin*.

Laws

Laws are of no Vigor unless enforced by *Rewards and Punishments*; which Rewards and Punishments are therefore to be proportioned to the *Nature* and *Degree* of the Observance or Transgression of the Laws.

The *Observance* and *Transgression* of God's Laws by Man (whose bodily Actions depend upon the inward Motions of his Mind) consist not in any Machinal Acts of the Body, but in the *voluntary Motions and Intentions of the Mind.*

The *Rewards*, therefore, or *Punishments* of such Observance or Transgression, are chiefly to be conferr'd or inflicted upon the *Mind or Soul of Man*; and that after the full course of his Actions, either good or bad, is accomplished. Which is to say, in the *Future State* of the Soul, after its separation from the Body.

In the *Belief* and *Sense* of these general Truths, and in the *Practice* of the Duties that result from them, according to their full extent and tendency, consists all *True Religion.*

Whatsoever else is introduced into any Religion, either notional or practical; I say, whatsoever does not necessarily flow from some of these Branches, or tend

tend to enforce the obſervance of them, is no Eſſential part of True Religion; but the meer product of Superſtition, Folly, or Deſign.

Every Man is anſwerable to *God*, the Supream Law-giver, for his *own particular Conduct*, *in every Branch* of theſe Duties; as they relate either to God, to his Neighbour, or to himſelf.

Men are anſwerable to *one another* for ſo much (and for ſo much only) of theſe Duties as relates to their *mutual Welfare and Security*; becauſe every Man has ſo much Intereſt (and no more) in another Man's Conduct.

The *Difficulty* of exerciſing this *mutual Right*, that every Man has (thus far) to inſpect *another* Man's Actions, has obliged Men to enter into *Societies*; and to commit unto ſome particular Perſons the general Inſpection of all things, in order to the *Publick Good.*

This is the *End of all Governments*, in which the principal Intereſt of Governours themſelves is included. And conſequently, it is the *Duty of Governours*, above all things, to provide for the general *Safety and Welfare of a People.*

The *Peoples Safety*, either againſt Foreign or Domeſtick Enemies, is beſt provided

provided for by their *Union.* Their Strength against Foreign Enemies is thereby increased, and the very Source of Domestick Enmities is thereby taken away.

This *Union*, and with it the general Welfare of a People, is best procured by such a Conduct in the Governours, as gives *Impartial Incouragement* to all Men that are Vertuous and Industrious, and *Perfect Security* to every Man in the quiet enjoyment of the Fruits of his own Labour.

Incouragements may be then said to be truly *impartial*, and *Enjoyments secure*, when nothing is made a Condition of the obtaining of any *Advantage*, but what evidently contributes to the *Establishment of the Government*; nor any thing made a Condition of the *Forfeiture* of any Right, but what evidently tends to its *Ruin.*

Capacity and *Fidelity* are just Titles of *Admission* to publick Imployments: *Incapacity* is a just ground of *Exclusion*; and *Infidelity* is a just ground of *Forfeiture.*

Any *Narrower Conditions* than these divide a People into *Parties*; and not only weaken the Government by their *Disunion*, but endanger it by their *Discontent.*

Govern-

Government is no farther concerned in *Matters of Religion*, than as the Principles, or Practices, of different Professors, tend to make them more, or less, fit for the *Duties of the Society*.

The *Principles* that are most proper to influence Mens Lives, and to engage them to a Consciciousness in their Duties, are the *Belief of a Deity, and of a Future Judgment*. No Man ought therefore to be indulged in the profession of any Opinions contrary to those truly Fundamental Ones.

Other *Opinions* in Religion that are meerly *Speculative*, and *Practices* that, are purely *Ceremonial*, having no Relation at all to the true Foundations of Government, ought to be *tolerated* by Governors, as *Indifferent*.

Whensoever any such *Indifferent* Opinions, or Practices, in Religion, are woven into the Constitution of a Government, and made the *Condition* of those *Incouragements* and *Enjoyments* which ought to be Equal, the best effect that can arise from thence, is only the *Advancement* and Satisfaction of some *one Party*, accompanied with the *Ruin* and Dissatisfaction of the *rest*.

A Government that *unites* the Professors of all Religions unto it self, by impar-

Impartial Incouragements, and Secure Enjoyments, is incomparably *Firmer* than that which leans upon the Single Strength of any one Party.

A People also that is settled upon this Basis, of *mutual Toleration and Charity*, is incomparably *more Happy* than those whose harmless Differences are imbittered by the Partiality of a Government.

Liberty of Conscience, therefore, *Universal, Impartial, and Inviolable*, (except only where the Principles or Practices of any sort of Professors tend evidently to the Prejudice of the Communality, and Ruin of the Government) *is the true Interest, and great Duty, both of Governors and People.*

FINIS.

UMI